This manga is to be read from Left to Right

(*Haritsuke = Crucifixion the criminal is hoisted upon a T-shaped cross Then executioners finish him off with spear thrusts The body was left to hang for the time before burial.)

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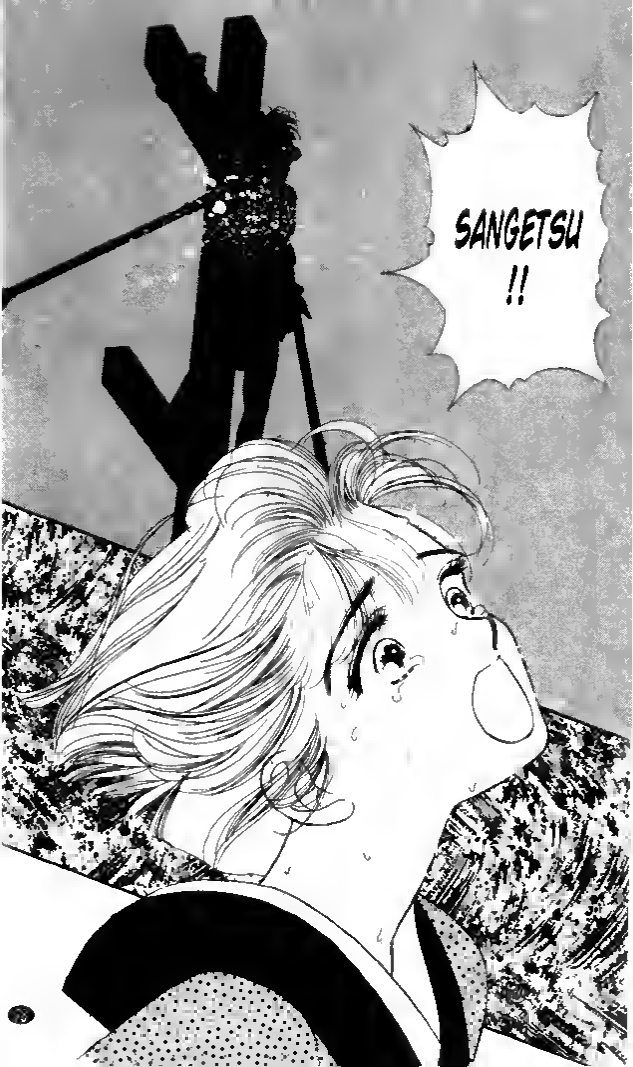
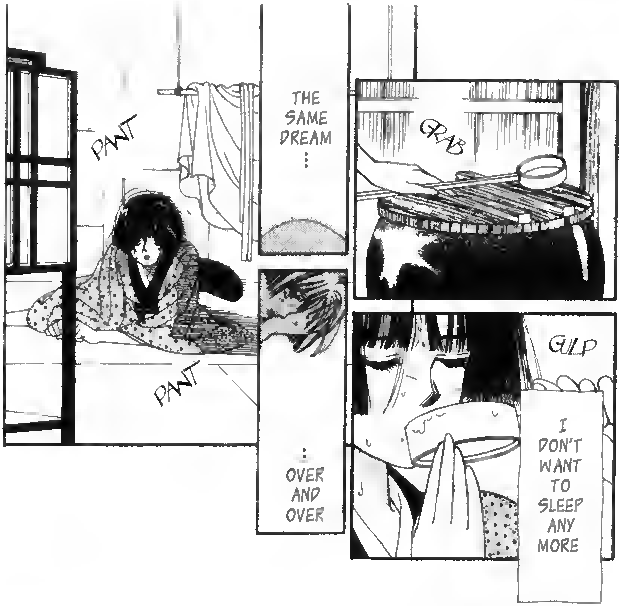

SANGETSU
!!



EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY EYES

THE NIGHT-MARE AWAITS THERE FOR ME

BUT NEITHER DO I WANT TO STAY AWAKE

I KEEP IMAGINING ALL THE BAD THINGS THAT MIGHT HAPPEN

PLEASE WAIT, OFFICERS.
THERE MUST BE A MISUNDERSTANDING.
HIS NAME ISN'T TSUKIYA ⋮
OUT OF MY WAY !
MOVE !!
HOLD HIM AT THE STATION FIRST !
IF YOU TRY TO PROTECT HIM,
WE'LL CHARGE YOU AS AN ACCOMPLICE TOO.

SO BE IT !!
LOCK ME UP WHER-EVER YOU WANT !
COME GET ME, STINK-ING OFFI-CERS !!
BUT NEVER LOOK DOWN ON ME.
YOU MUST HAVE HEARD OF USUGUMO OF THE FLOWER CITY, YOSHIWAR A OF EDO
...
YAE !

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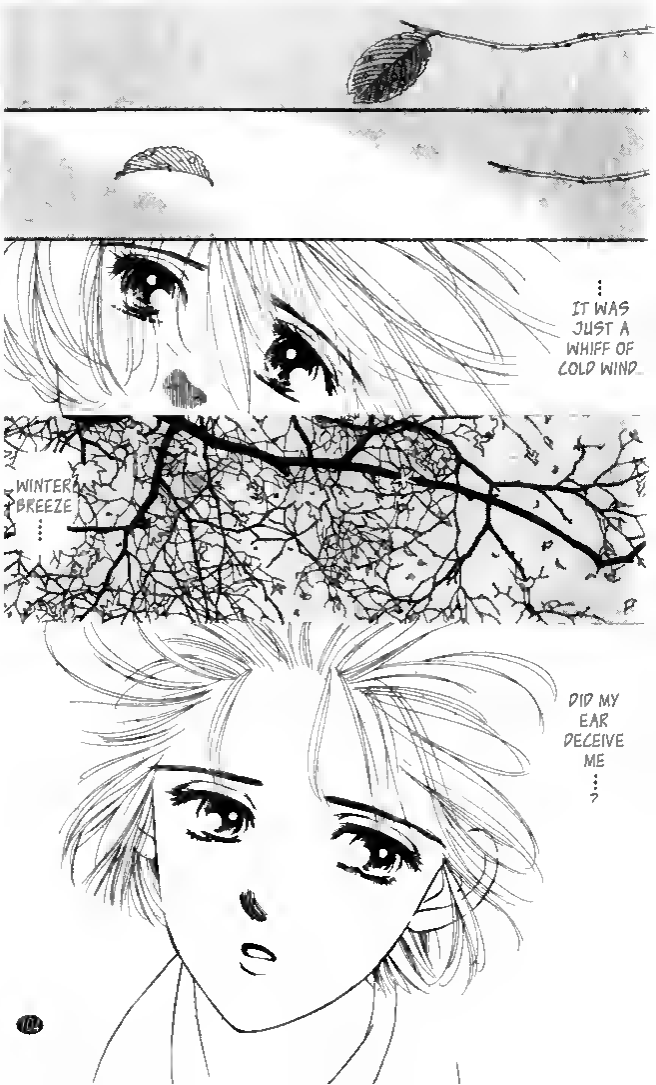
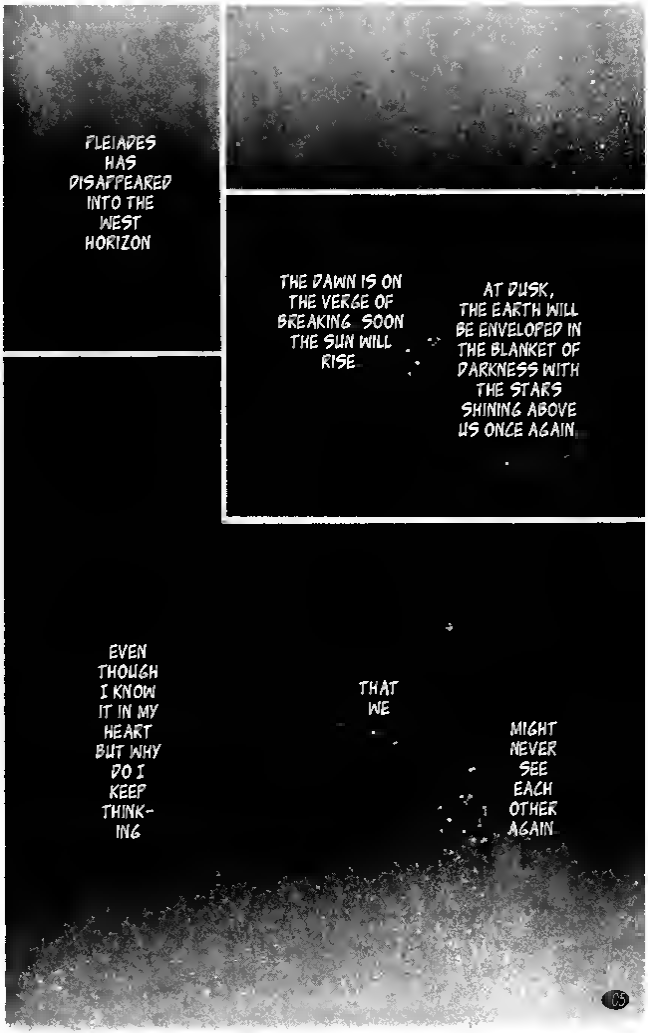
Usugumo
SAN-GETSU !?
SFX RUSH
GIG GIG
GIG GIG
WHIZZ


IT WAS JUST A WHIFF OF COLD WIND...
WINTER BREEZE...
DID MY EAR DECEIVE ME...?


PLEIADES HAS DISAPPEARED INTO THE WEST HORIZON
THE DAWN IS ON THE VERGE OF BREAKING SOON THE SUN WILL RISE
AT DUSK, THE EARTH WILL BE ENVELOPED IN THE BLANKET OF DARKNESS WITH THE STARS SHINING ABOVE US ONCE AGAIN
EVEN THOUGH I KNOW IT IN MY HEART BUT WHY DO I KEEP THINK-ING
THAT WE
MIGHT NEVER SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN

Police station
SFX: DOZE
RATTLE
WHOOSH
RATTLE
SFX: WOOSH WOOSH

HEY
HERE
BIG BRO
MISTER IN THE NEXT CELL
YAHO! FINALLY I GET TO SEE YOUR FACE.
HEY, WHEN DID YOU GET IN?
WHAT DID YOU DO TO END UP HERE ?
YOU ARE PRETTY LIKE AN ACTOR, YOU KNOW
ME? I'M HERE ON SOME PETTY CRIMES.
BUT THE NAME "FUUIRINNO OYUU" DOES MEAN SOMETHING IN THE PICKPOCKETS' WORLD.

fu fu fu,
BEING LOCKED UP NEXT TO A PRETTY BOY.
IS THIS MY LUCKY DAY OR WHAT!
MORE-OVER,
I CAN SMELL THAT YOU AND I SHARE THE SAME KIND OF SCENT.
THE SCENT OF EVIL.
YOURS IS MUCH STRON-GER.
WELL : NOT EXACTLY THE SAME.
OR RATHER.. THE SCENT OF DARK-NESS.

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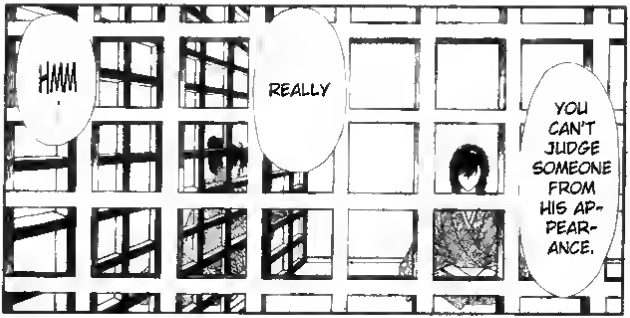
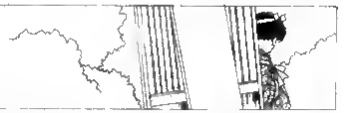
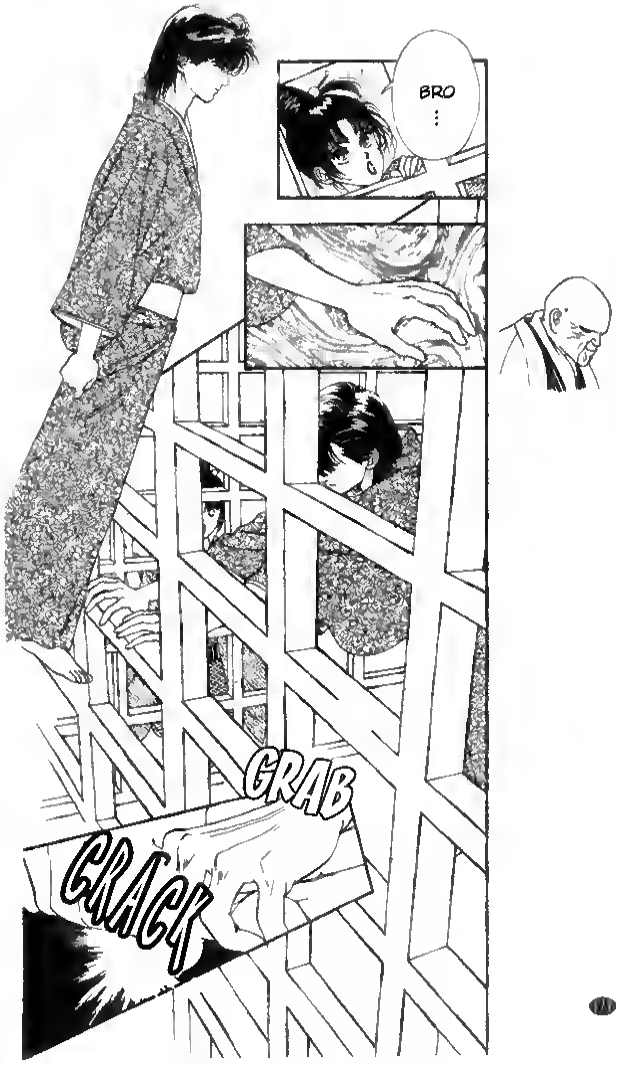
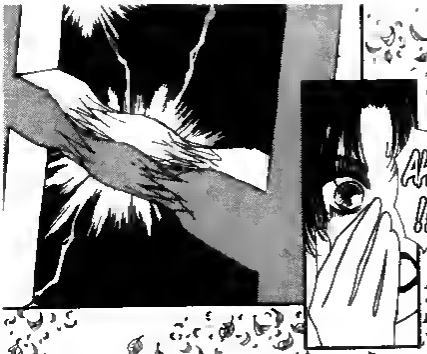





BRO
...
GRAB
CRACK



I HAVE KNOWN IT ALL ALONG

I KNEW IT FROM THE BEGINNING

THAT I'M DESTINED TO LEAD THIS WAY OF LIFE

I CAN'T CLEANSE MYSELF FROM IT

I AM AWARE OF THAT FULLY WELL

TODAY AT UMANO-KOKU (11AM-1PM)
THE POLICE FROM EDO WILL BE HERE TO TAKE SANGETSU INTO CUSTODY
HURRY! COME BACK!
SANGETSU ! !!
BANG
TSUKI-YA !
IS TSUKIYA HERE !?
Stomp
Stomp

RUSH
RUSH
DID HE COME HERE !?
HARBORING A CRIMINAL WILL GET YOU INTO TROUBLE.
THERE IS NO ONE, SIR.
HMM... LOOKS LIKE HE DIDN'T COME HERE AFTER ALL.
LAST NIGHT ?
THAT'S NOT COMPLETELY A SURPRISE.
WHAT ... !?
WHAT DID YOU SAY THAT? ISN'T HE AT THE STATION?
LAST NIGHT HE BROKE OUT OF THE PRISON AND ESCAPED !!

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GUK
GUK
GUK
GUK
THIS IS NOT TRUE !
BUT ...
HE WOULDN'T BE INVOLVED WITH A PICKPOCKET GIRL
" WE WILL RUN AWAY TOGETHER "

WHERE ARE YOU!?
SANGETSU !!

I'M OYUU.
SANGETSU AND I WILL BE LEAVING TOGETHER SOON.
EH...?
USUGUMO-SAN... RIGHT?
SANGETSU TOLD ME THAT
YOU ARE AN OIRAN AT YOSHIWARA.
HE SAID "HER WORLD AND MINE ARE TOO DIFFERENT.
I'LL BE BETTER OFF SHARING MY PATH WITH A PICKPOCKET GIRL LIKE YOU."

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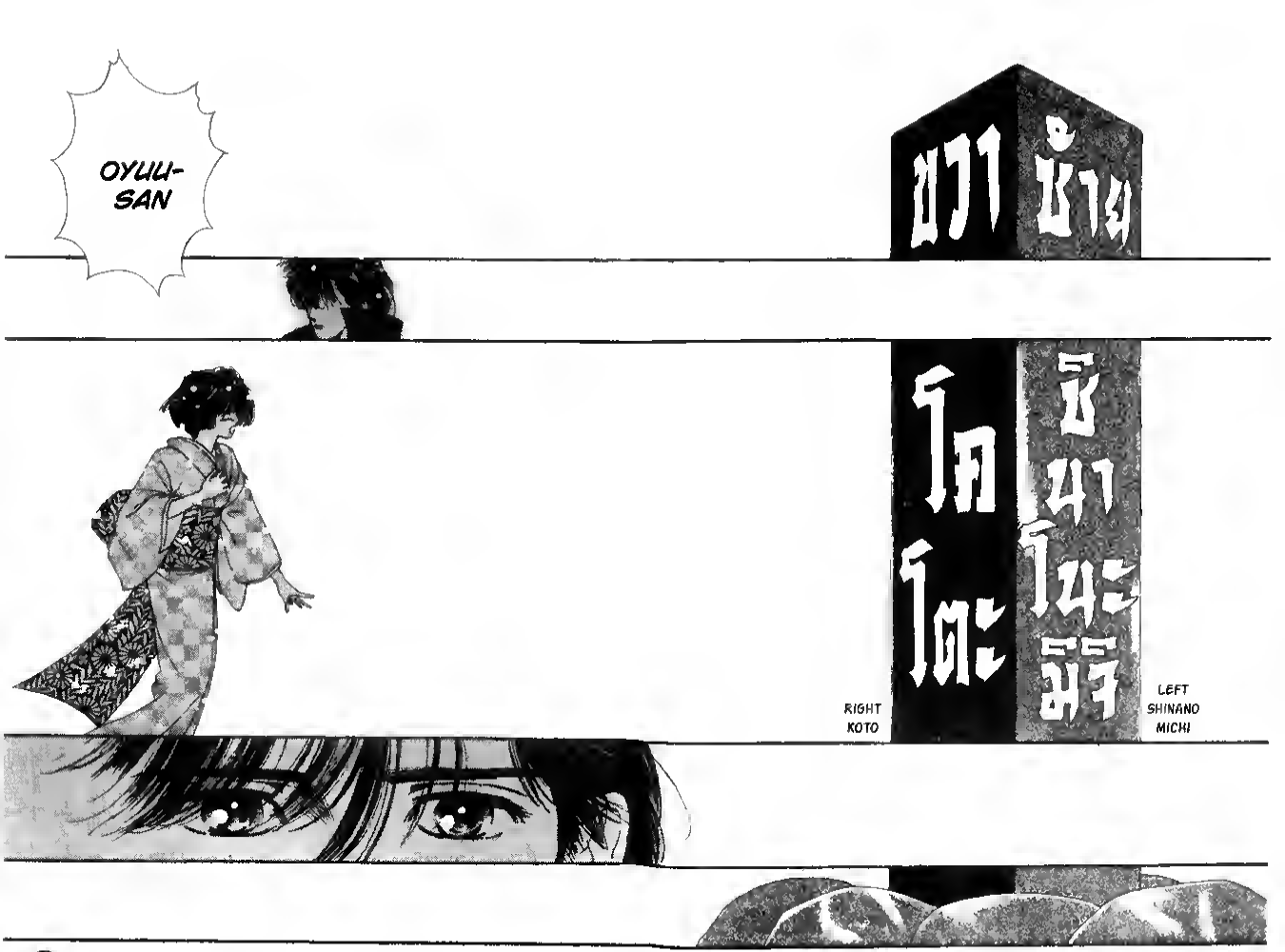
OYUU-SAN



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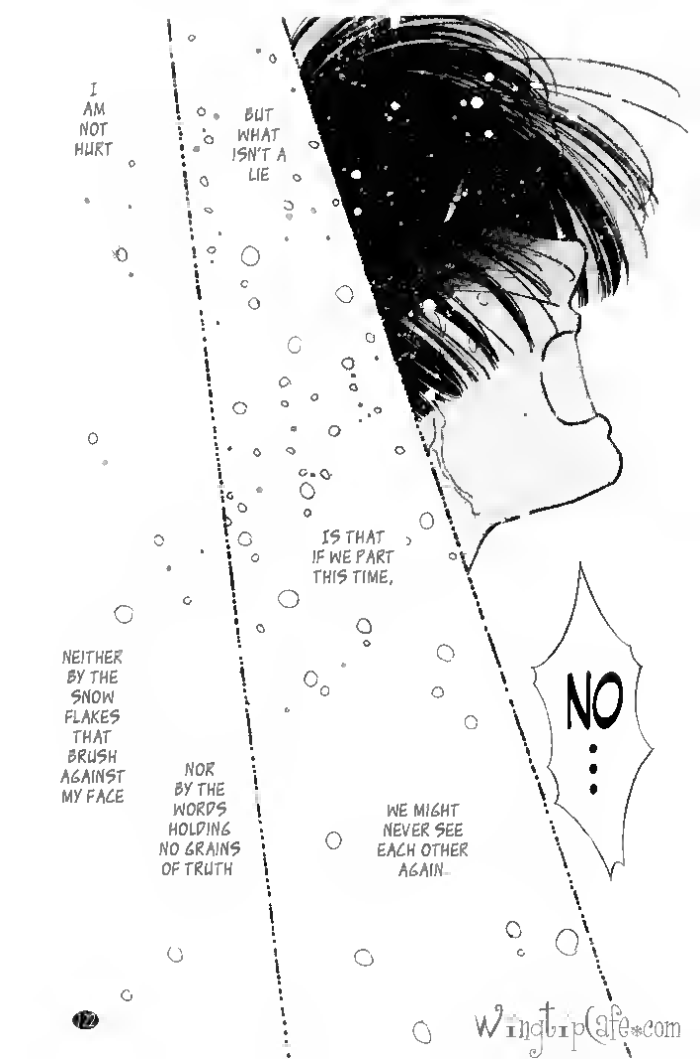

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WINTER'S WIND, HALT YOUR ROAR
I CANNOT HEAR HIS VOICE ABOVE YOU
SAN-GETSU'S SCENT
IS FADING AWAY WITH YOU
SNOW
HOLD YOUR FALL

DO NOT
ERASE
HIS
FOOT-
PRINTS

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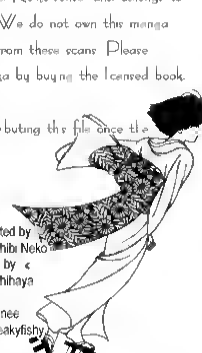

CREDITS

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Scan & Edited by Akanee

Quality checked by freakyfishy

This manga is to be read from Left to Right

gallop

200 years ago

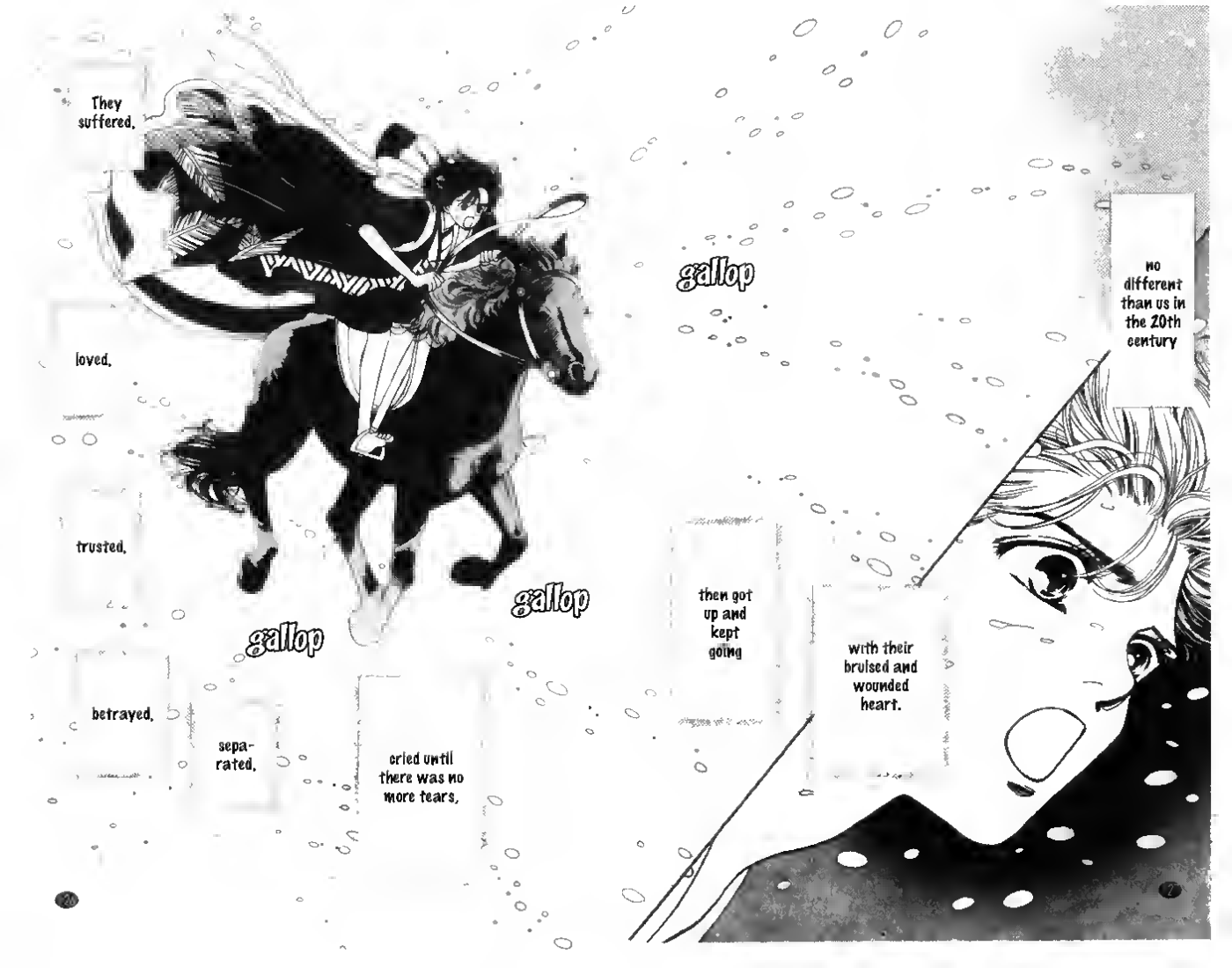
the late Edo era

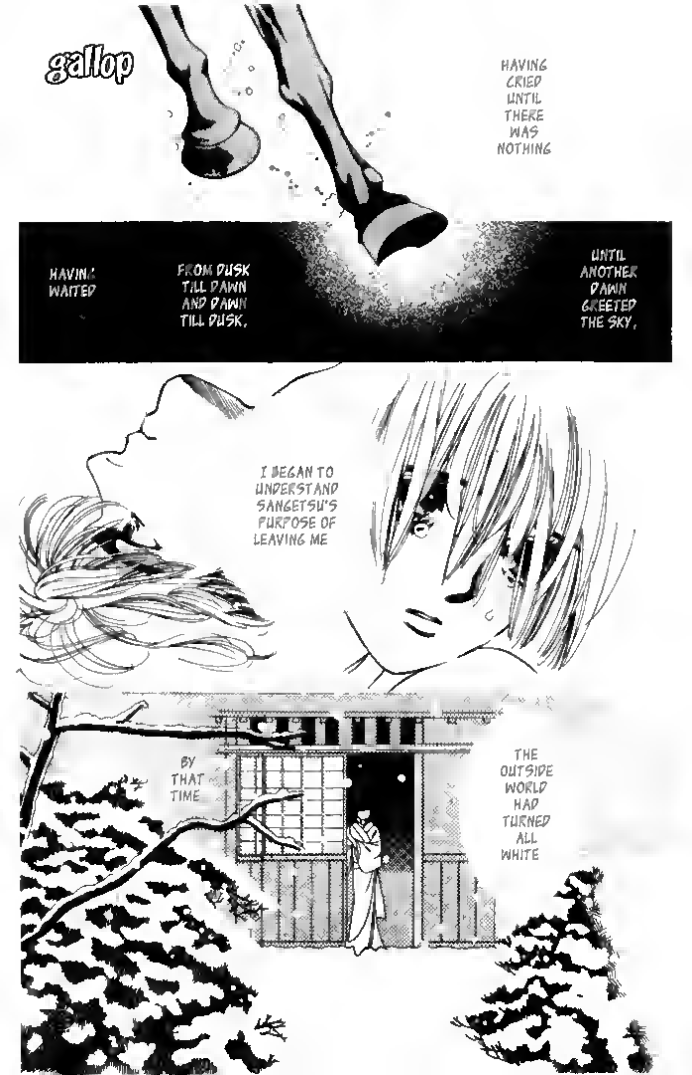
gallop

gallop

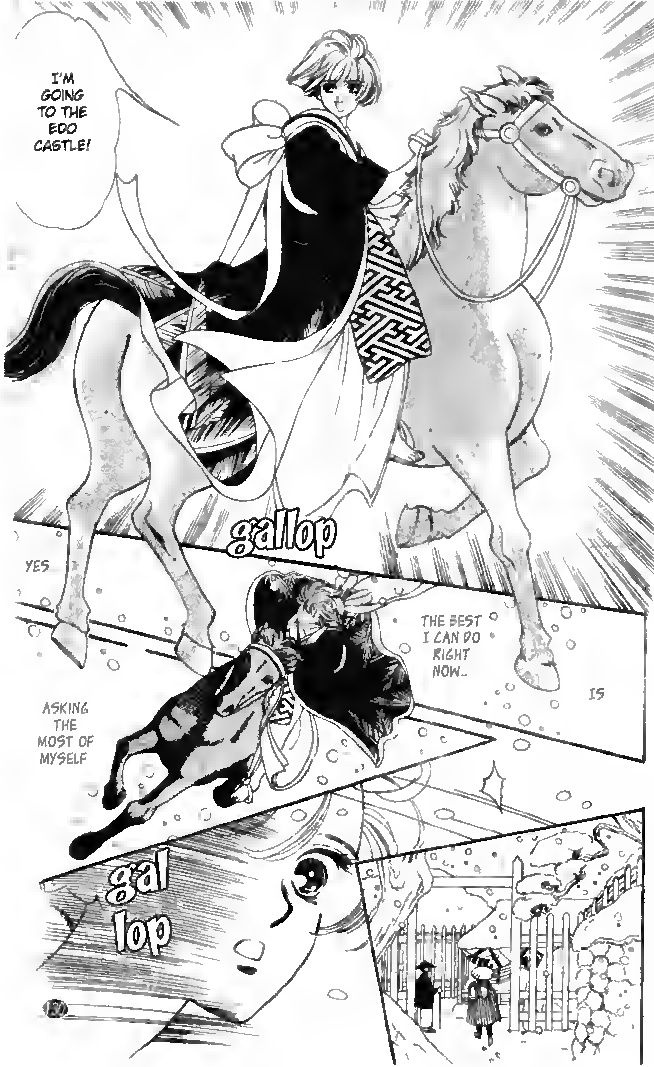
for us, the future generations, it was the era of adventures and romance

But for those who had to live through it as their present time


They suffered,
loved,
trusted,
betrayed,
separated,
cried until there was no more tears,
gallop
gallop
gallop
then got up and kept going
with their bruised and wounded heart.
no different than us in the 20th century


gallop
HAVING CRIED UNTIL THERE WAS NOTHING
HAVIN: WAITED
FROM DUSK TILL DAWN AND DAWN TILL DUSK,
UNTIL ANOTHER DAWN GREETED THE SKY,
I BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND SANGETSU'S PURPOSE OF LEAVING ME
BY THAT TIME
THE OUTSIDE WORLD HAD TURNED ALL WHITE

GRAB
WHOS-EVER HORSE IT IS
PLEASE LET ME BORROW IT.
I'M SORRY, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A SHORT STAY AT THIS GUARD POST, EVERYONE HAS BEEN VERY KIND TO ME.
O...OYAE-CHAN!? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO EDO !

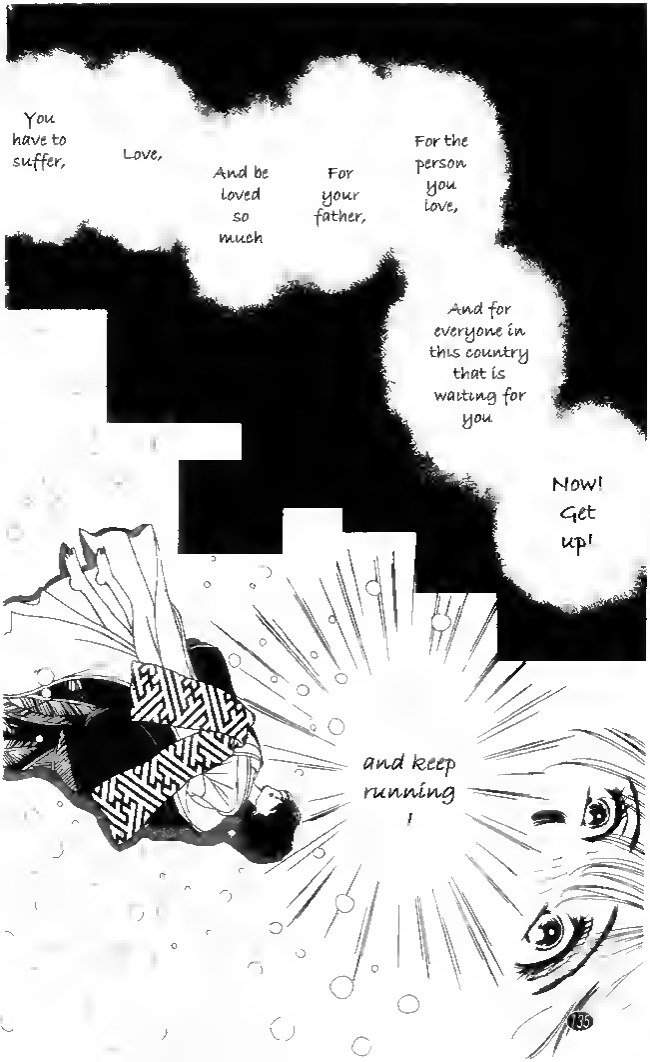

I'M GOING TO THE EDO CASTLE!
gallop
YES
THE BEST I CAN DO RIGHT NOW...
IS
ASKING THE MOST OF MYSELF
gal lop

THE CHECK-POINT...
LOOKS LIKE I HAVE TO
JUMP ACROSS THAT CLIFF
!
HEY! SOMEONE IS FORCING HIS WAY OUT.
WHOA!
Neigh
DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!
Jump

AA AH!
YOU WON'T CATCH ME
I HAVE TO REACH EDO!
SLIP
stumble
Stumble
AA AA AA H!!

Thunk
NO
I FAILED?
LOOSE IN VAIN?
AM I GOING TO MAKE FATHER'S LIFE AND SANGETSU'S DECISION

Usugumo
Yes
I died. Now I'm with mother
Stop babbling nonsense
BOX
Mother...?
You haven't kept any promises you made with me
There is a long way ahead of you, my dear


You have to suffer,
Love,
And be loved so much
For your father,
For the person you love,
And for everyone in this country that is waiting for you
Now! Get up!
and keep running!

H...HORSE,
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT..? YOUR LEGS..
PASSED
Jolt
M..
MEOW!
DON'T YOU MEOW ME!
YOU... YOU TRANSFORMED INTO A HORSE!?
KO TETSU!?
NOD
KOTETSU
I'VE DECIDED TO GO TO THE EDO CASTLE
AS THE SHOGUN'S DAUGHTER.
I HEARD OF MILADY'S NEWS FROM JIROKICHI-SAN..
SORRY IT REALLY WAS LIKE SPYING ON YOU..
I want to be your bodyguard

AS THE PRIN-CESS
LADY
PRIN-CESS...!!
UNTIL TODAY, I'VE LIVED MY LIFE
I'LL SEIZE IT INTO MY CONTROL
BUT HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET INTO THE CASTLE?
BY STRUG-GLING AGAINST THE COM-PELLING HAND OF FATE.
BUT FROM NOW ON, I'D LIKE TO TRY ATTACKING IT AS WELL
AND SOAR HIGHER THAN I CAN EVER BE.

TRUE...
NOBODY IS GOING TO BELIEVE THAT USUGUMO, A COURTESAN OF YOSHIWARA IS THE SHOGUN'S DAUGHTER.
I HAVE NO CREDENTIAL DOCUMENT
THE ONLY EVIDENCE IN MY POSSESSION IS THE BLANK PILLBOX
ANY SMALL MISTAKE CAN COST US A DECAPITATION
BEFORE WE REACH THE INNER CASTLE WHERE KIKUNOSUKE-SAN LIVES UNDER THE COVER OF THE SHOGUN,
I KNOW...
SO MY STRATEGY IS...
THE CONFIDENCE OF GLAMOROUS USUGUMO-OIRAN, THE NO 1 COURTESAN OF THE COUNTRY
thump
thump
C-
CONFIDENCE?
AS IN...?

CHARG-
ING IN
HEAD
ON
WITH
ABSOLUTE
FORTH-
RIGHT SIN-
CERITY
!

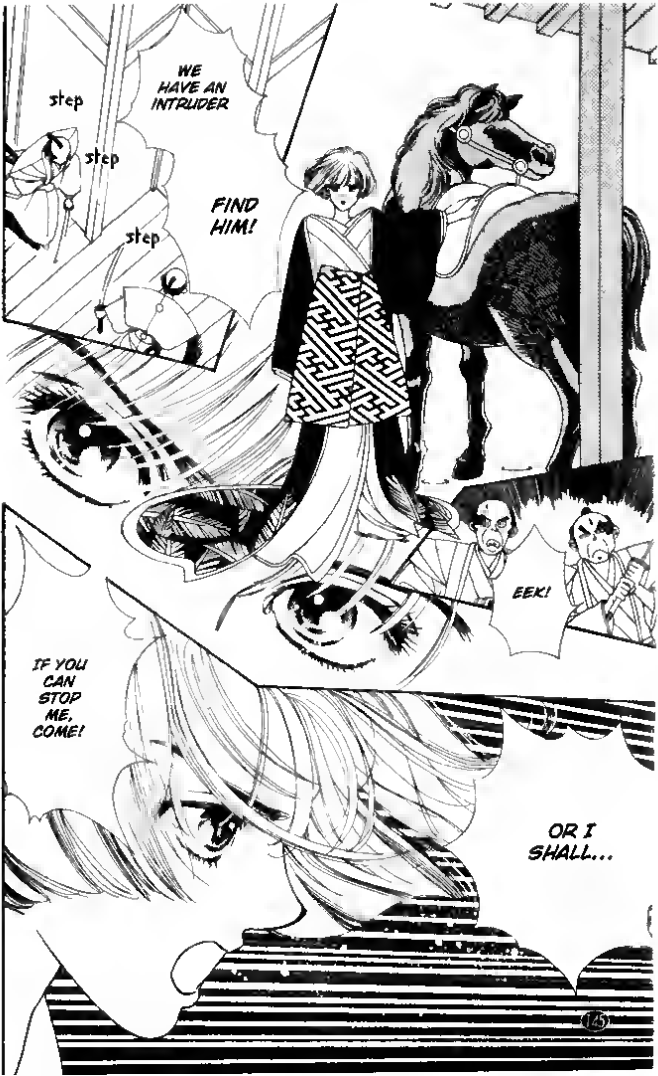
The shogun is being examined by Aoto Toichiro, the royal doctor, in a private chamber.
THE SURGERY WAS SUCCESSFUL
HE'LL NEED HALF A YEAR TO RECUPERATE
BUT HIS LORDSHIP IS COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED
REALLY ?
HMM
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
THAT'S AWFULLY LONG.
HALF A YEAR, HUH. . ?

YOU PROBABLY HEARD THE RECENT NEWS ABOUT MOUNT ASAMA'S ERUPTION.
YEAH.
IT SEEMS THAT THIS INCIDENCE HAS CAUSED CROP FAILURE IN [illegible] REGIONS.
MY EXPERTISE RUNS IN KILLING FILTHY OFFICERS AND ELITE DAIMYO.
COMING UP WITH AN AID POLICY TO RELIEVE CATASTROPHIC DISTRESS IS OUT OF MY LEAGUE.
Running a country's hard.
WITH THE FIRE OF MOUNT ASAMA GETTING STRONGER,
IT'S A MATTER OF TIME WHEN PEOPLE WILL FIGURE OUT THAT I'M A PHONY
BUSTLE
BUSTLE
!?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
SOMEONE IS MAKING A COMMOTION AT THE FRONT GATE.

No horses inside the castle
STOP!
WE WILL NOT GO SOFT ON YOU EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A WOMAN!
I'M USUGUMO, THE OIRAN AT MIURA BROTHEL OF EDO'S YOSHIWARA.
WHAT DID YOU SAY!?
I'D LIKE TO CALL ON MY FATHER, LORD YOSHIMUNE, THE EIGHT SHOGUN OF TOKUGAWA.
PLEASE OPEN THE GATE.
THIS WOMAN MUST BE CRAZY.
TAKE HER!

BOWS !!
REA
DY
snort
CREAK
OPEN
WOW !

WHO OPENED THE GATE!? WHO!?
NOBODY, SIR!
THE GATE... THE GATE OPENED ITSELF!
THANK YOU KOTETSU.
YOU CAST A SPELL TO OPEN IT FOR ME, RIGHT?
NO, MY LADY.
I DIDN'T DO ANY-THING
EH?
IT'S THE TRUTH, SIR!
IT'S LIKE THE GATE OPENED ITSELF TO WELCOME THAT GIRL!
MADNESS! ARE YOU SLEEP-TALKING!


step
step
step
WE HAVE AN INTRUDER
FIND HIM!
EEK!
IF YOU CAN STOP ME, COME!
OR I SHALL...

STRIKE YOU !!
WITH MY POWER !
FATE, I HAVE COME HERE AS YOU WISH
NOW
LEAD ME
rattle
rattle
H-HEY !!
WHAT'S HAP-PEN-ING?
ARG HHH !
FL
A
SH

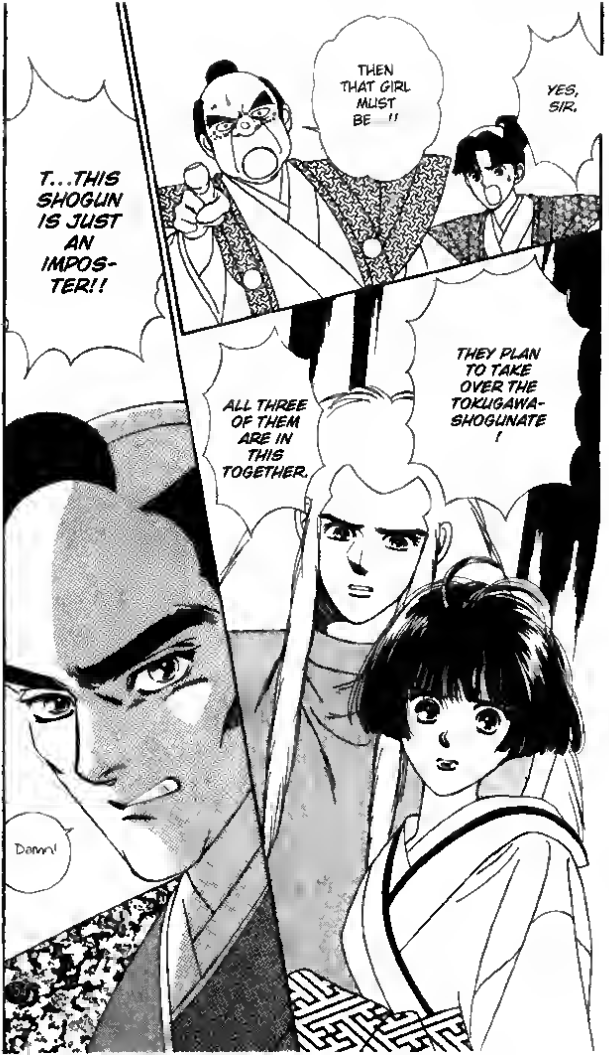
SHOW ME THE WAY!
BLAST
jolt
P... PRI NCESS-
THE LIGHT IS ENVEL- OPING THE PRIN- CESS
HOW INSOLENT! YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST TAKE THIS USUGUMO WHEREVER YOU WANT!?
USU- GUMO !

GONGEN-SAMA — A RESPECTFUL NAME OF THE LATE SHOGUN TOKUGAWA IEYASU, THE FOUNDER AND THE FIRST SHOGUN OF THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE

KIKUNO-SUKE...
fwww
HISUGUMO,
I MAY ACCEPT YOU AS MY DAUGHTER,
BUT YOU HAVE TO LEAVE BEHIND THE LIFE YOU'VE BEEN ACCUSTOMED TO
AND RESUME THE ROLE OF A PRINCESS
STOP!

I HOPE YOU'VE ALREADY BRACED YOURSELF...
FOR IT MAY ENTAIL...
PLEASE WAIT, MY LORD!
IF THIS GIRL IS TRULY YOUR DAUGHTER,
SHE MUST BE ABLE TO PRODUCE A BIRTH CERTIFICATE CERTIFIED BY YOUR LORDSHIP AS AN EVIDENCE!
EVIDENCE...
THE ONLY THING THAT CONNECTS ME TO MY FATHER,
IS THIS LACQUER PILLBOX, MY MOTHER'S KEEPSAKE.
YES, MY LORD.

THE ROUJUU IS FULLY AWARE OF USUGUMO'S BIRTH RIGHT; HE JUST PRETENDS TO BE IGNORANT
WITH OR WITHOUT EVIDENCE, HE NEVER INTENDED TO ACKNOWLEDGE USUGUMO AS A PRINCESS ANYWAY
SQUINT
gulp
ROUJUU -SAMA !!
THOSE TWO ARE SWINDLERS, SIR !!
I OVERHEARD WHAT THE DOCTOR AND HIS LORDSHIP WERE TALKING
ABOUT DURING THE EXAMINATION...


T...THIS SHOGUN IS JUST AN IMPOS-TER!!
THEN THAT GIRL MUST BE...!!
YES, SIR.
THEY PLAN TO TAKE OVER THE TOKUGAWA-SHOGUNATE!
ALL THREE OF THEM ARE IN THIS TOGETHER.
Damn!

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CREDITS

Scanned by Akanee
Japanese Thai translated by
Chibi Neko
Thai-English translated by
Chihaya
Proofread by Metu
Edited by Dlori

This manga is to be read from Left to Right

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throw
AH...
Wink
CRASH
KYA!
CLATTER

STRIKE
BOOM

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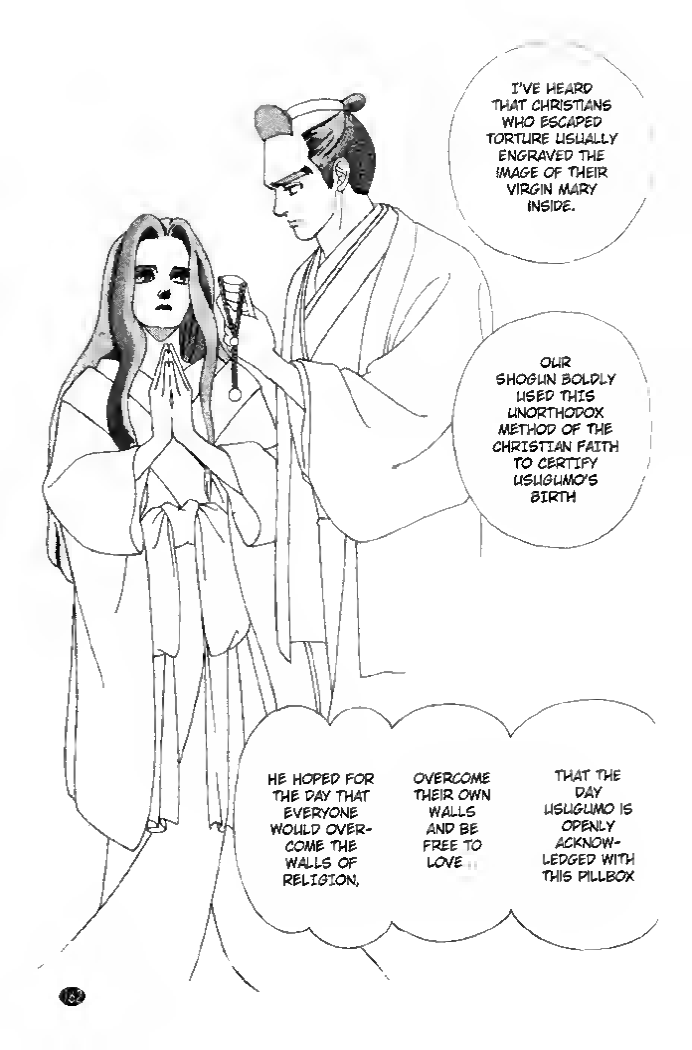
Shime

THIS CERTIFICATE'S HOLDER
IS, BEYOND DOUBT,
TOKUGAWA YOSHIMUNE'S REAL CHILD.
MAGIC MIRROR...?
THIS PILLBOX IS A MAGIC MIRROR.
A MAGIC MIRROR!!
Normally it looks like an ordinary metallic mirror.
But upon being hit by the light, the message engraved on the second sheet underlain inside the mirror
is revealed.
141


I'VE HEARD THAT CHRISTIANS WHO ESCAPED TORTURE USUALLY ENGRAVED THE IMAGE OF THEIR VIRGIN MARY INSIDE.
OUR SHOGUN BOLDLY USED THIS UNORTHODOX METHOD OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH TO CERTIFY USUGUMO'S BIRTH
HE HOPED FOR THE DAY THAT EVERYONE WOULD OVER-COME THE WALLS OF RELIGION,
OVERCOME THEIR OWN WALLS AND BE FREE TO LOVE
THAT THE DAY USUGUMO IS OPENLY ACKNOW-LEDGED WITH THIS PILLBOX

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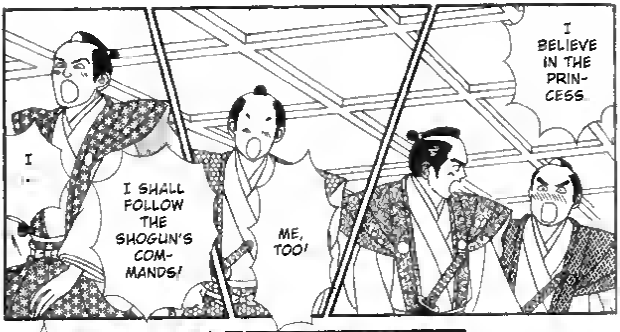
HIS LORDSHIP IS BEING TREATED AT MY PLACE
THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT HE WAS BEING SLOWLY POISONED IN HIS DAILY MEALS FOR A LONG TIME.
SHUT UP! THE REIGN OF THAT AILING YOSHI-MUNE IS OVER.
KILL THEM !!
CHINK
BLAST IT!
TAP

HITACHINOKAMI • THE GOVERNOR OF HITACHI PROVINCE. A SAMURAI RANK

P/R Note: Sengoku-jidai = (Warring States Period) the civil war for control of the Shogunate



Roujuu and his associates who plotted to overthrow the Bafuku government were stripped of their titles that night.

MOTHER,
SANGETSU,
I'VE MADE IT
I'M GLAD
I'M GLAD
I CHOSE THIS PATH
THAT I AM HERE TODAY
SILLY GIRL. WE HAVE NO TIME FOR BEING SENTI-MENTAL
MY LADY WILL TAKE CARE OF THIS COUNTRY UNTIL HIS LORDSHIP HAS RECOVERED
YES.

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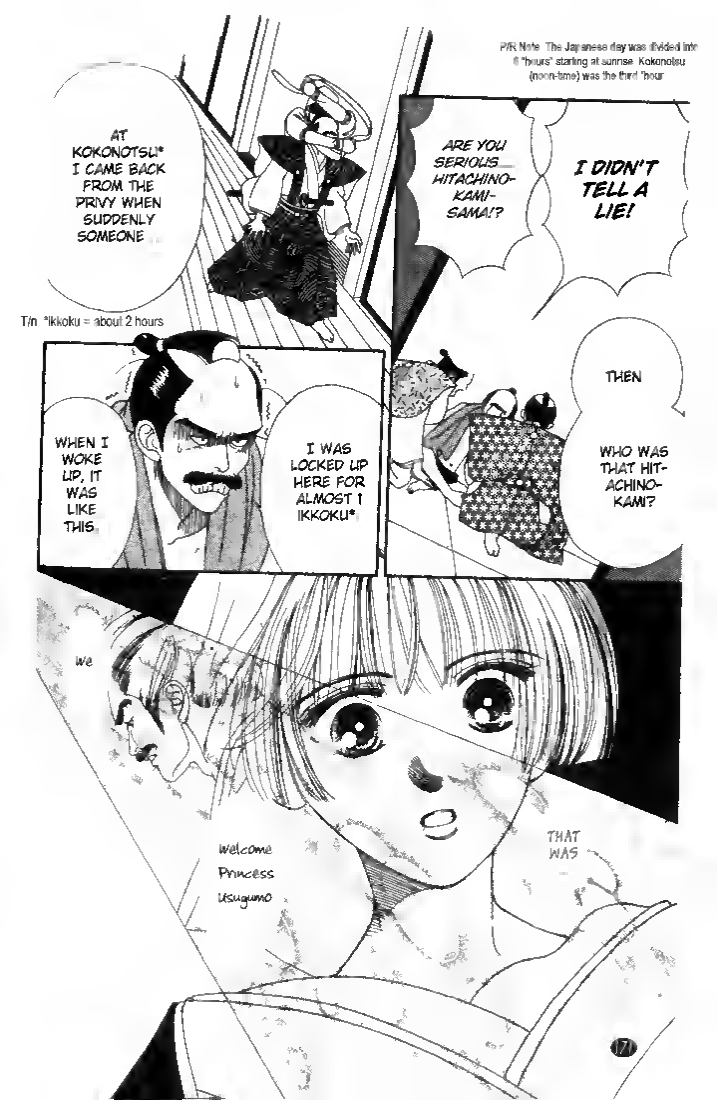
P/N Note: The Japanese day was divided into 6 "hours" starting at sunrise. Kokonotsu (noon-time) was the third "hour"
AT KOKONOTSU* I CAME BACK FROM THE PRIVY WHEN SUDDENLY SOMEONE
T/n: *Ikkoku = about 2 hours
WHEN I WOKE UP, IT WAS LIKE THIS.
I WAS LOCKED UP HERE FOR ALMOST 1 IKKOKU*
ARE YOU SERIOUS, HITACHINO-KAMI-SAMA!?
I DIDN'T TELL A LIE!
THEN
WHO WAS THAT HITACHINO-KAMI?
we
Welcome Princess Usuguno
THAT WAS
17

USUGUMO
SAN-
GETSU

SAN-GETSU !!
IS THAT YOU?
I KNOW
YOU'RE HERE.

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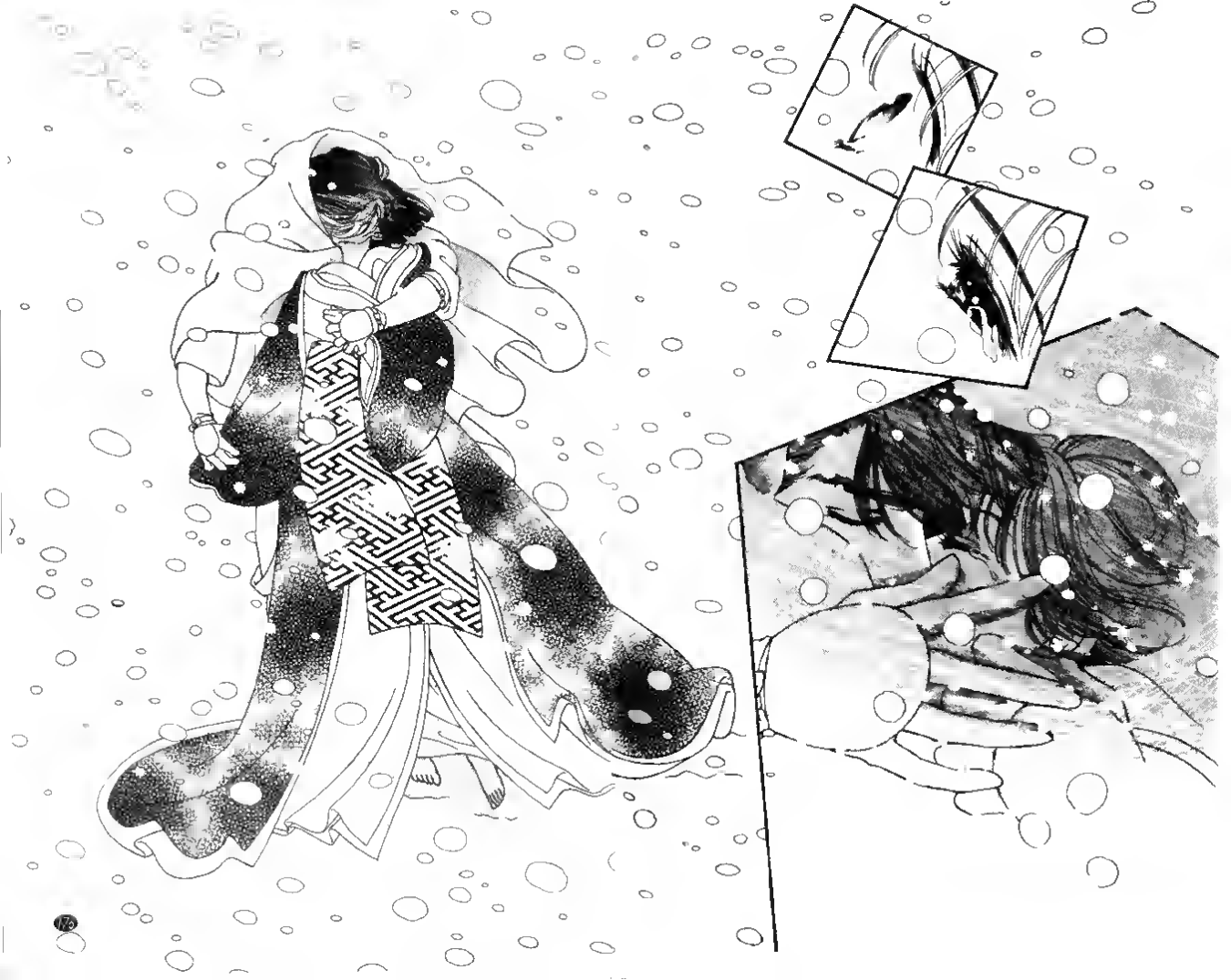

SAN-GETSU ?
WAS IT REALLY YOU...
OR JUST
THE MIRAGE
OF SNOW ?

SKUSH
SKUSH
WHAT AN IDIOT!
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP FOLLOWING ME?
...YOU
DOING THAT IS LIKE RIPPING OPEN YOUR OWN WOUND

Windtripcafe.com

OUR WORLD AND HER'S ARE TOO DIFFERENT...
SOMEDAY SHE'LL HAVE TO MARRY FOR HER FAMILY--FOR HER COUNTRY
REGARDLESS OF HOW MUCH YOU LOVE HER
AND I'LL THINK
THAT'S BEST FOR HSUGUMO.
...I WILL
MAKE YOU FORGET ABOUT YOUR "PRINCESS"
YOU'LL SEE !!

This year

on the 30th day of the 12th month,

the shogun's regent, cute as a cotton ball,

lovely as a soft fluff of snow,
was born.

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Credits

Manga Oedo wa Nemuranai (Edo never sleeps)
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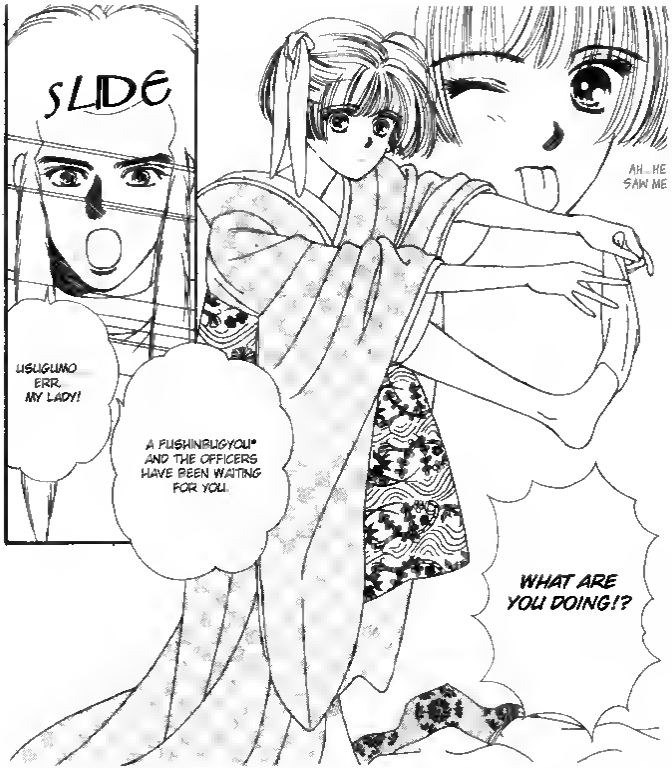
Edited by Dlori
Quality checked by Xeronin

This manga is to be read from Left to Right

SFX RUSTLE



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*Fushinbugyou = A ranked officer responsible for engineering works such as stone walls and water supplies.

*Han = Clan/Fief of feudal lords in Japan. Loosely similar to a province today.
**Ouoku – The section of Edo Castle where the women connected to the reigning Shogun resided. This included the shogun's mother, wife, and consorts.

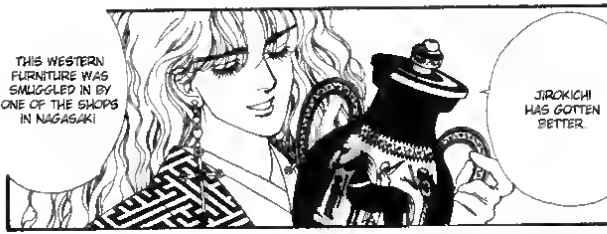
***MACHIBUGYOU = A RANKED OFFICER IN EDO BAKUFU RESPONSIBLE FOR JUDGING CRIME CASES AND PATROL IN MAJOR CITIES LIKE EDO, KYOTO, OSAKA.

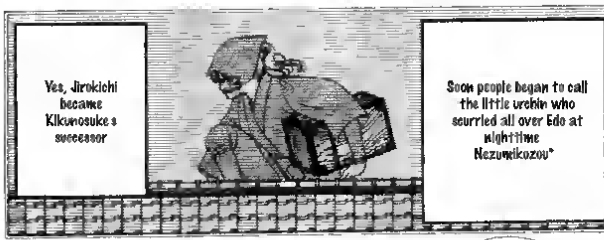
ON THE NIGHT OF THE 28TH -THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY...
A COMMOTION AROSE AT EDO'S YOSHIWARA 1ST DISTRICT. FIVE 15-YEAR-OLD NOVICE COURTESANS OF MIURA BROTHEL WERE REPORTED MISSING.
THIS CASE SMELLS FISHY.
NO!
RIGHT NOW YOU ARE THE REGENT FOR THE SHOGUN
CATCHING A CRIMINAL IS TOO DANGER-OUS.
DON'T DO ANYTHING RIDICU-LOUS!
NOBODY SAW HOW THEY ESCAPED.
BUT ANOTHER MIURA COURTESAN NAMED KIKYOU WHO HAD STAYED UP TO ADMIRE THE MOON, WAS HIT ON THE HEAD AND PASSED OUT.
HOWEVER, NO SUSPECTS PASSED THROUGH THE FRONT GATE BEFORE AND AFTER THE INCIDENT.
MY DEAR DOCTOR.

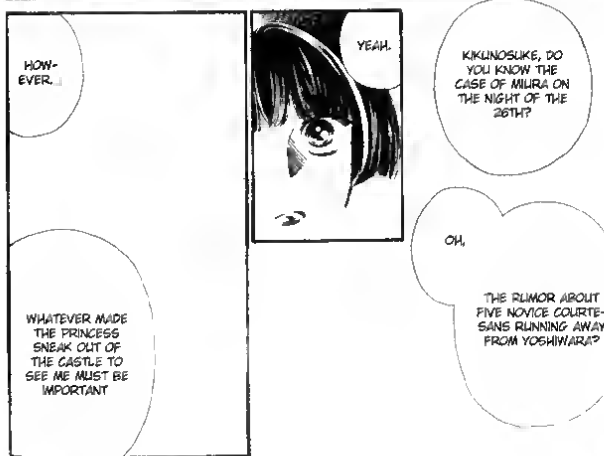
I WAS BORN OF A CHRISTIAN COURTESAN
AND RAISED AS AN OIRAN OF YOSHI-WARA, THE CITY OF FLOWERS
IF I DON'T STEP IN, WHO ELSE WILL HELP THOSE WOMEN?
DESPITE BEING HONORED AS THE SHOGUN'S DAUGHTER,
I'M STILL
AND ALWAYS WILL BE USUGUMO-OIRAN OF YOSHIWARA

PLEASE DON'T BE ABSENT FROM THE CASTLE FOR MORE THAN 3 DAYS, MA'M.
SO PLEASE...
I KNEW DOCTOR WOULD UNDERSTAND!
AH!
WAIT!
OFF I GO!
YOU MUST NOT PUT YOURSELF IN ANY KIND OF DANGER!
I'LL ASK KIKUNOSUKE TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOU
ARE YOU LISTENING, UGUISUMOJ?

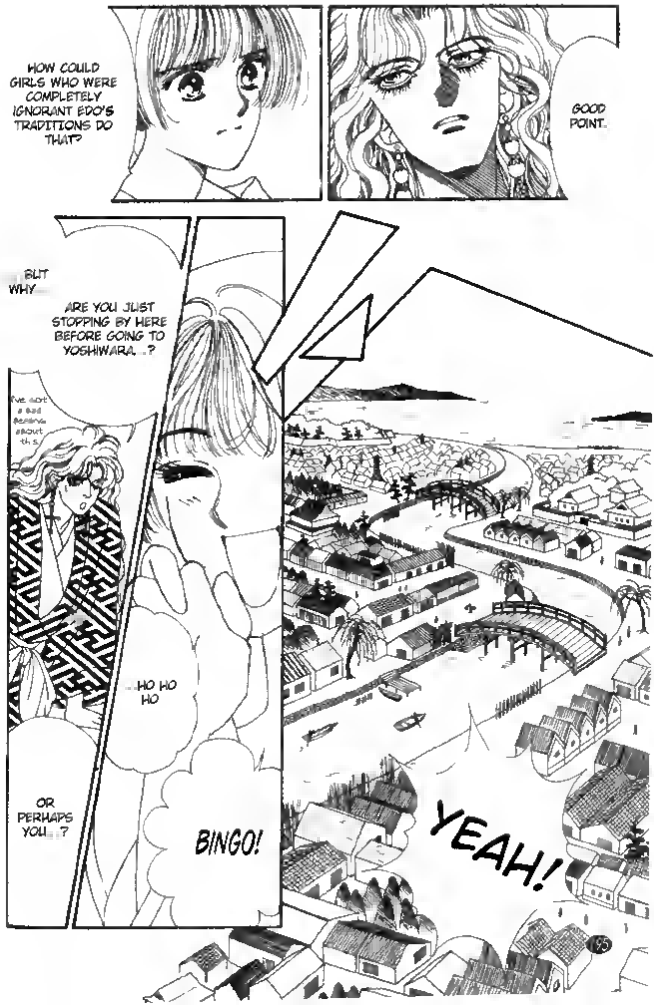
Shiragiku building, the first western-style restaurant in Japan
where Kikumasuke the mysterious golden haired phantom thief, enjoyed his retirement as the owner
WHAT BUSINESS HAS BROUGHT YOU HERE?
Well he wasn't exactly retired so to speak.
Shiragiku building was his lair of stolen treasure.
OPEN
OH MY! IT KEEPS INCREASING
HI.
WOW! IT'S GORGEOUS


THIS WESTERN FURNITURE WAS SMUGGLED IN BY ONE OF THE SHOPS IN NAGASAKI
JIROKICHI HAS GOTTEN BETTER.


Yes, Jirokichi became Kikunosuke's successor
Soon people began to call the little urchin who scurried all over Edo at nighttime Nezumikozou*


HOW-EVER.
WHATEVER MADE THE PRINCESS SNEAK OUT OF THE CASTLE TO SEE ME MUST BE IMPORTANT
YEAH.
KIKUNOSUKE, DO YOU KNOW THE CASE OF MIURA ON THE NIGHT OF THE 26TH?
OH,
THE RUMOR ABOUT FIVE NOVICE COURTESANS RUNNING AWAY FROM YOSHIWARA?

*NIJUUROKUYAMACHI = LITERALLY MEANS WAITING FOR THE 26TH


HOW COULD GIRLS WHO WERE COMPLETELY IGNORANT EDO'S TRADITIONS DO THAT?
GOOD POINT.
BUT WHY...
ARE YOU JUST STOPPING BY HERE BEFORE GOING TO YOSHIWARA...?
I've got a bad feeling about this.
HO HO HO
OR PERHAPS YOU...?
BINGO!
YEAH!

I ALWAYS WANTED TO GO UP ON A KITE
WOW! AWESOME! LIKE I'M LIKE A BIRD !!
UGH! STOP SQUIRMING! WE'RE GONNA FALL!
Soar
GAH!!
KYA! WATCH YOUR HAND! PERVERT!
YOU WANT ME TO BOOT YOU OUT?

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อุ
1

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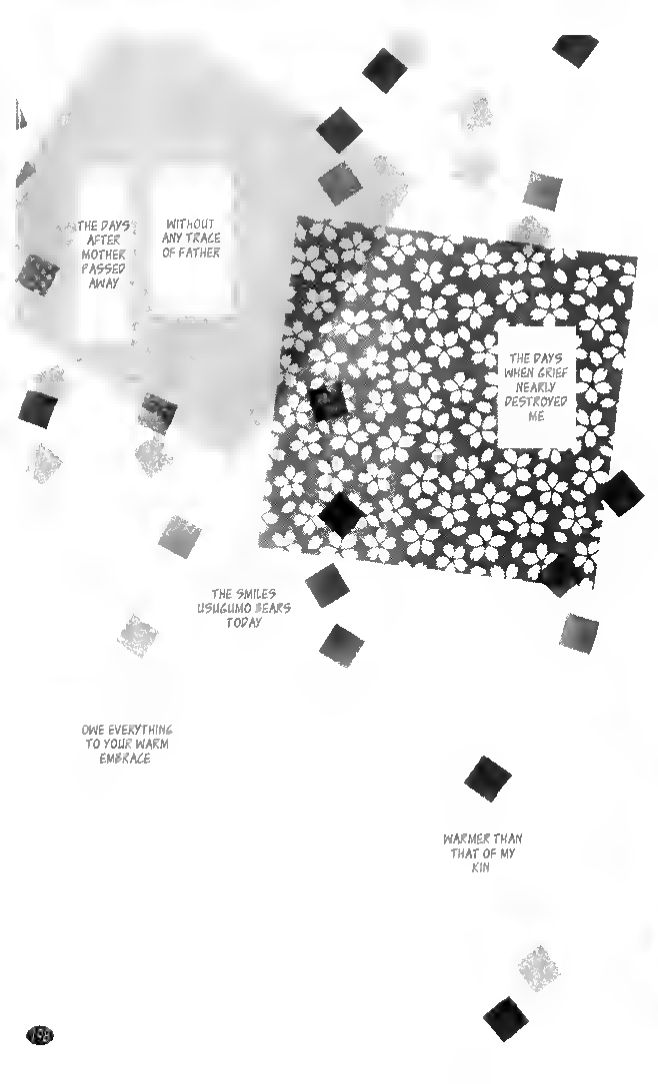
NOBODY EXCEPT FOR THE PEOPLE IN THE CASTLE KNOWS THAT I'M A PRINCESS

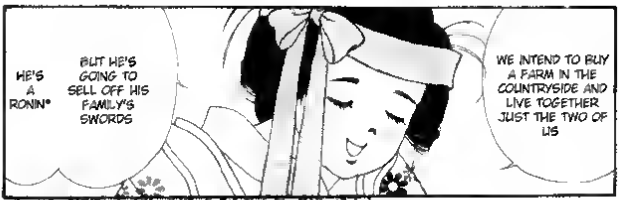
I CONFIDED IN YOU TWO BECAUSE YOU'RE LIKE PARENTS TO ME

YOU RAISED AND TOOK CARE OF ME IN YOSHIWARA.

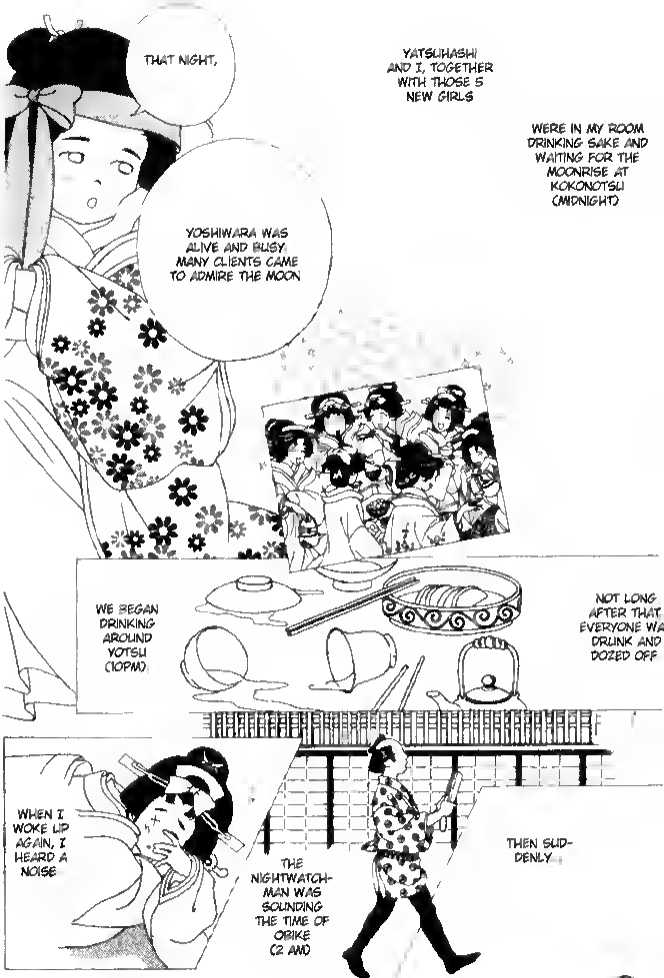
THERE IS NOTHING THAT I SHOULD HIDE FROM YOU!


THE DAYS AFTER MOTHER PASSED AWAY
WITHOUT ANY TRACE OF FATHER
THE DAYS WHEN GRIEF NEARLY DESTROYED ME
THE SMILES USUGUMO BEARS TODAY
OWE EVERYTHING TO YOUR WARM EMBRACE
WARMER THAN THAT OF MY KIN

I LOVE YOSHIWARA
I LOVE EDO
THIS TIME IT'S MY TURN TO PROTECT EVERYONE
USUGUMO-CHAN...
KIKYOU-SAN,
I HEARD ABOUT YOUR HEAD INJURY.
CAN YOU SIT UP NOW?
YEAH. KIKYOU WAS SO UNLUCKY
AND SHE JUST AGREED TO BE RANSOMED.
RAN-SOMED!?
KIKYOU-SAN?



(* Ronin ["Wave Man"] = Masterless Samurai. To support themselves they hired themselves out as bodyguards and taught martial arts to non-samurai)


THAT NIGHT,
YOSHIWARA WAS ALIVE AND BUSY. MANY CLIENTS CAME TO ADMIRE THE MOON.
YATSUHASHI AND I, TOGETHER WITH THOSE 5 NEW GIRLS
WERE IN MY ROOM DRINKING SAKE AND WAITING FOR THE MOONRISE AT KOKONOTSU (MIDNIGHT).
WE BEGAN DRINKING AROUND YOTSU (10PM).
NOT LONG AFTER THAT, EVERYONE WAS DRUNK AND DOZED OFF.
WHEN I WOKE UP AGAIN, I HEARD A NOISE.
THE NIGHTWATCHMAN WAS SOUNDING THE TIME OF ORIKE (2 AM).
THEN SUDDENLY...

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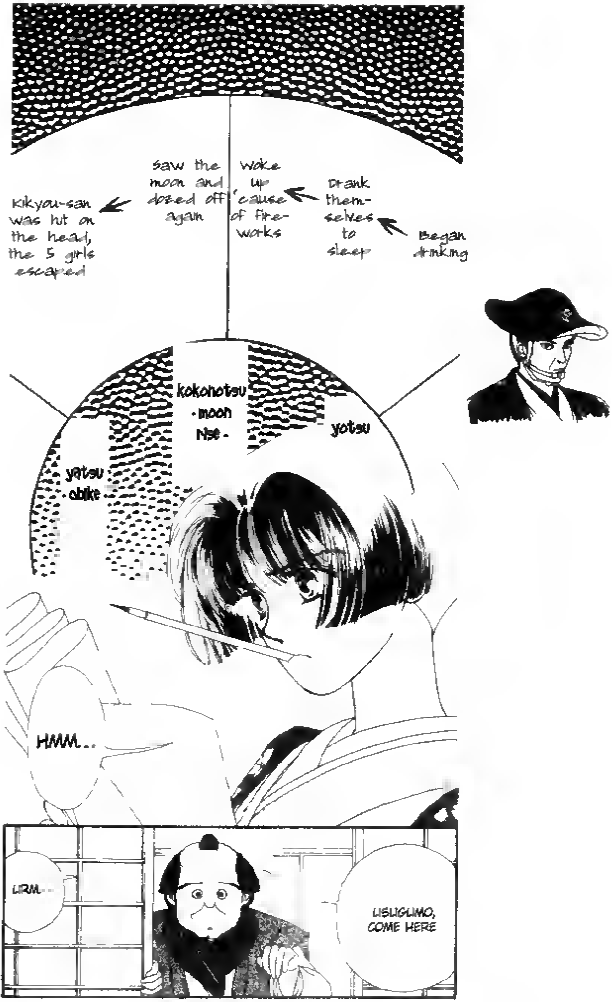
*Furisode -- a style of kimono with long sleeves traditionally worn by unmarried women

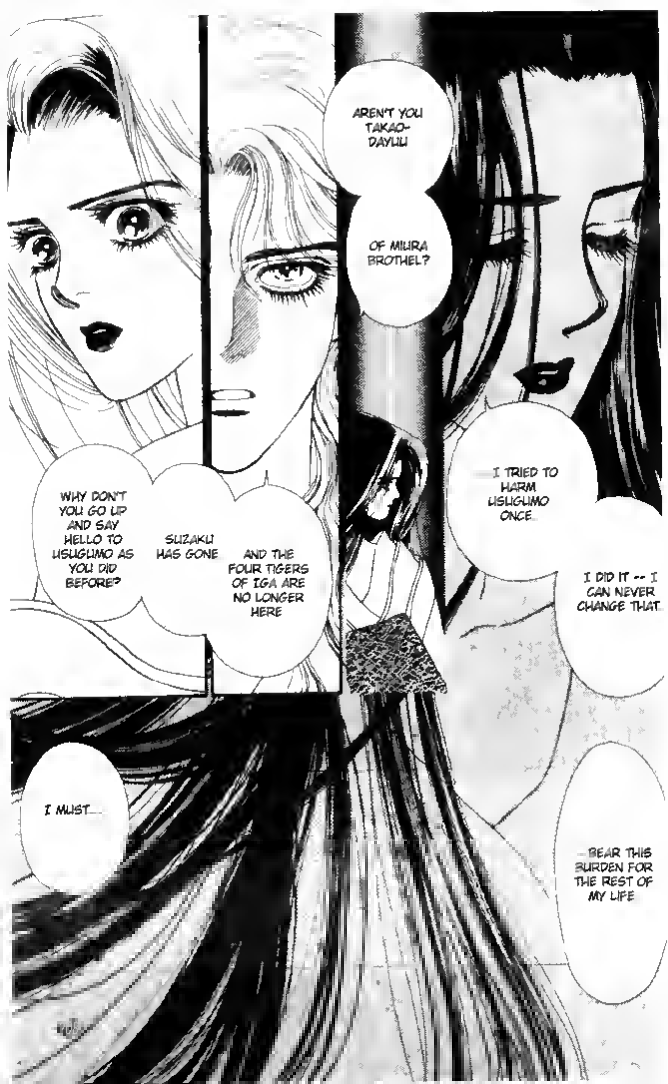
YOU'RE RIGHT THE MOON JUST CAME OUT.
WOW, SO PRETTY.
What? They're all out cold.
What a pity
Zzzzz
LEGEND SAYS THAT IT'S THE SIGN OF LORD BUDDHA APPEARING WITH HIS TWO DISCIPLES
TO GUIDE HIS BELIEVERS TO HEAVEN. IT'S THE FIRST TIME I EVER SAW SOMETHING LIKE THAT
THE MOON I SAW OF THE 26TH WAS INCREDIBLY LUMINOUS. IT SHONE SO BRIGHTLY AS IF THERE WERE 3 OF THEM.
YEAH, ME TOO.
THEN I CRASHED OUT 'TIL MORNING.

Looks like this spring will be my lucky time
THE PRECIOUS CURVE OF THE WAXING MOON
EH?
THAT'S NOT RIGHT YATSUHASHI-SAN
THE MOON ON THE 28TH WAS WANING
YATSUHASHI, YOU MUST HAVE BEEN AWFULLY DRUNK
EH? BUT I SURELY REMEMBER...
MAYBE
I DRANK A LOT
ANYWAYS, YOU'RE LUCKY THAT YOUR WOUND ISN'T SERIOUS
YOU'LL BE ABLE TO RECOVER IN TIME TO BE "MRS." AKABOSHI
HOW VEXING, WE TOOK SUCH GOOD CARE OF THOSE GIRLS,
WHAT AN UNGRATEFUL BUNCH - DON'T YOU AGREE, KIKYOU?
YES


saw the moon and dozed off again
woke up 'cause of fire-works
Drank them-selves to sleep
Began drinking
kikyou-san was hit on the head, the 5 girls escaped
kokonotsu -moon Nse-
yotsu
yatsu -obike-
HMM..
LIRIL..
LISLISLIMO, COME HERE

FIRST OFF, THOSE FIVE GIRLS DIDN'T LOOK CAPABLE OF COMING UP WITH THE SCHEME TO RUN AWAY
THEY WERE RESPONSIBLE AND DEVOTED TO THEIR PARENTS
THEY WERE SOLD HERE TO PAY OFF THEIR PARENTS' DEBTS. IF THEY RAN AWAY, THEIR FAMILIES WOULD SUFFER UNDER THE CRUEL HANDS OF THE DEBT COLLECTORS
HOW THEY EVER ASSAULTED THE OLDER COURTESAN AND FLED FROM THE BROTHEL IS BEYOND ME
I JUST FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE
HAVE SOME TEA
THANK YOU
WELL...
ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THAT NIGHT,
THERE IS SOMETHING THAT NAGS ME

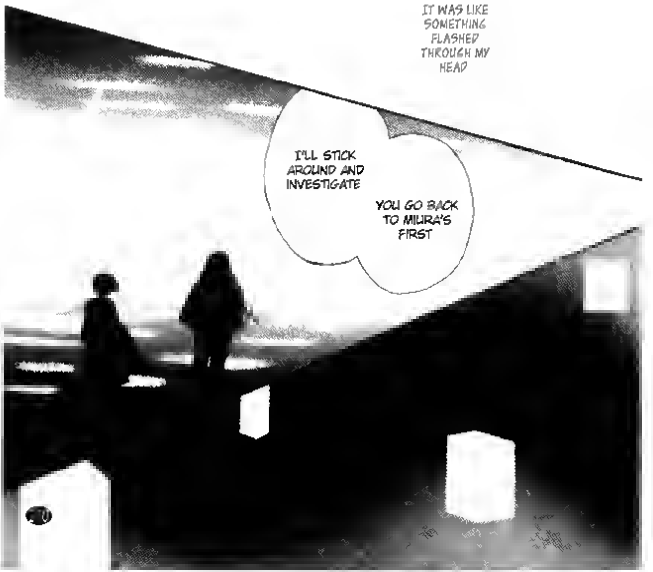
Clack
BY THE WAY...
THIS MAY NOT BE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE INCIDENT BUT...
HIS PASSION FOR GAMBLING MAKES IT HARD FOR HIM TO SAVE UP
AND HIS STORY OF THE AKABOSHI'S HEIRLOOM SWORDS...
I HEAR THAT THEY'RE ONLY BAMBOO STICKS INSIDE THE SHEATH THE REAL BLADES WERE EXCHANGED FOR MONEY LONG TIME AGO
AKABOSHI, KIKYOU'S LOVER...
HE HAS AN UGLY REPUTATION
I TRIED MANY TIMES TO DELAY THE RANSOM
BUT KIKYOU SEEMS TO HAVE FALLEN HARD FOR HIM...
THERE'S NO NEED TO HIDE


AREN'T YOU TAKAO-DAYUU OF MIURA BROTHEL?
I TRIED TO HARM USUGUMO ONCE...
I DID IT -- I CAN NEVER CHANGE THAT...
...BEAR THIS BURDEN FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE
I MUST...
WHY DON'T YOU GO UP AND SAY HELLO TO USUGUMO AS YOU DID BEFORE?
SUZAKU HAS GONE
AND THE FOUR TIGERS OF IGA ARE NO LONGER HERE

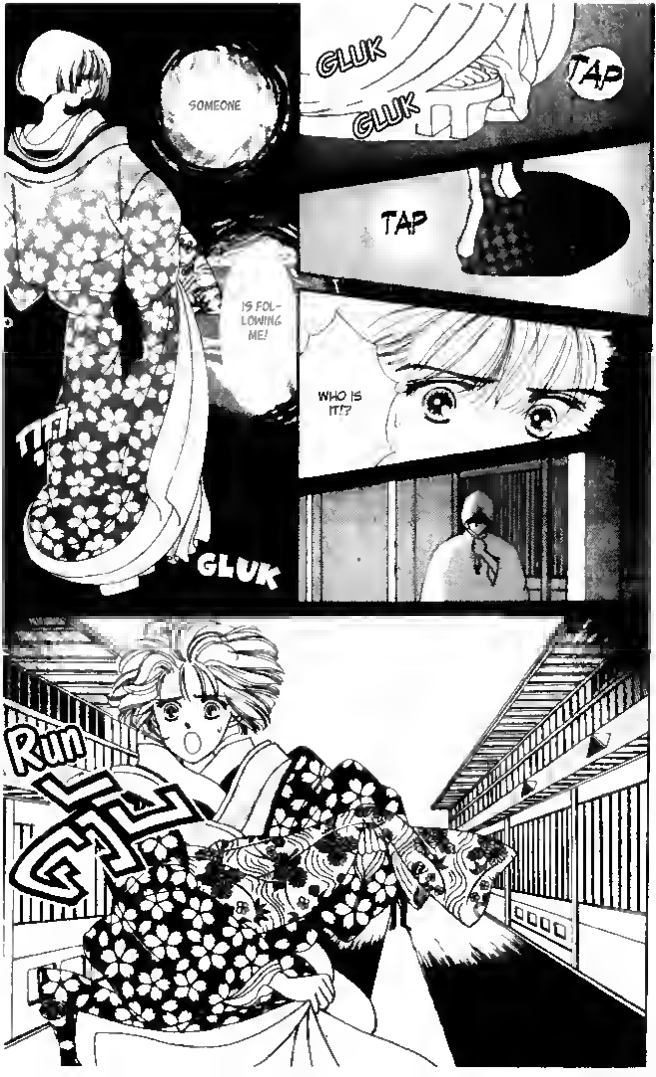
九郎助稲荷大明神
THERE WAS ACTUALLY A LOOPHOLE IN THE SECURITY THAT ALLOWED THOSE GIRLS TO ESCAPE YOSHIWARA.
I HEARD THAT ABOUT 30 MINUTES BEFORE MOONRISE,
THE GUARDS AT THE FRONT GATE ALL RAN TO THE TOILET BECAUSE OF BAD BENTO
THEY COULDN'T FIND ANYONE TO COVER THEIR DUTIES AT THAT MOMENT
明神
EH?
BUT EVERYONE WAS IN KIKYOU-SAN'S ROOM UNTIL YATSU
THAT'S
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE
THEY COULD ONLY MAKE IT OUT OF YOSHIWARA AFTER YATSU. AFTER THEY HIT KIKYOU-SAN
The guards went to toilet
Yatsu-hashi and Kikyou woke up by fireworks
Saw the girls still sleeping
Dozed off again
AND DURING KOKONOTSU KIKYOU-SAN AND YATSUHASHI-SAN DID SEE THOSE GIRLS SLEEPING LIKE A LOG
Prank themselves to pretend sleep
Kikyou was hurt, the girls escaped
Passed out until morning
kokonotsu
·moonrise·
yotsu
yatsu
·oiike·

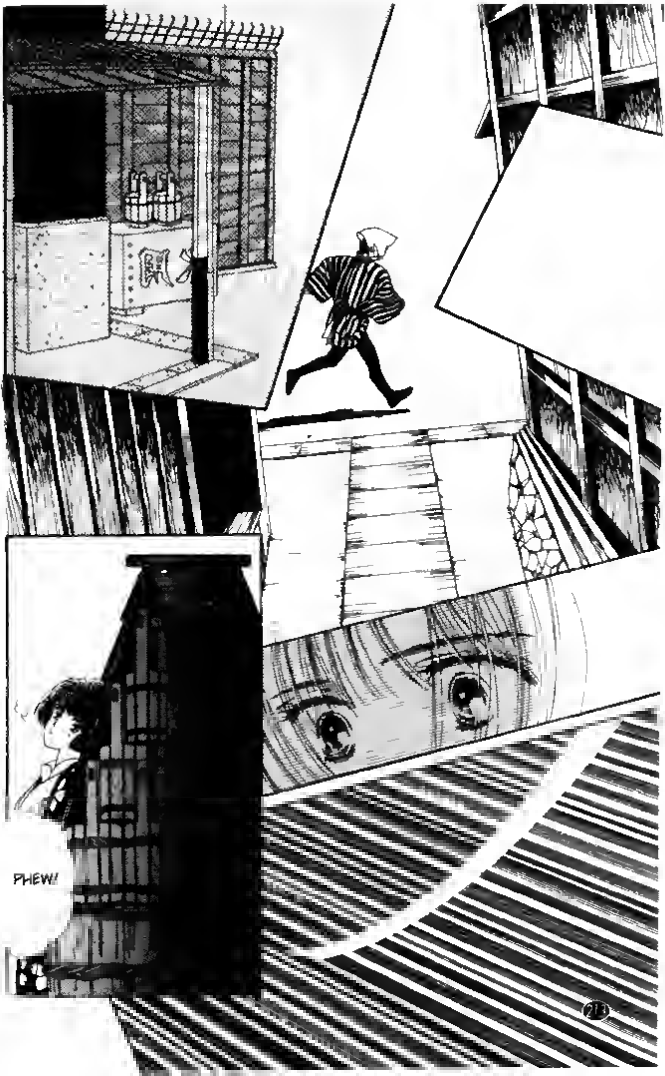
A SHORT WHILE AGO

WHILE I WAS DRINKING TEA WITH THE OWNER



* OKABASHO = AN ILLEGAL BROTHEL


SOMEONE
IS FOL-
LOWING
ME!
TIP
GLUK
GLUK
TAP
TAP
WHO IS
IT!?
Run
TIP
TIP


PHEW!

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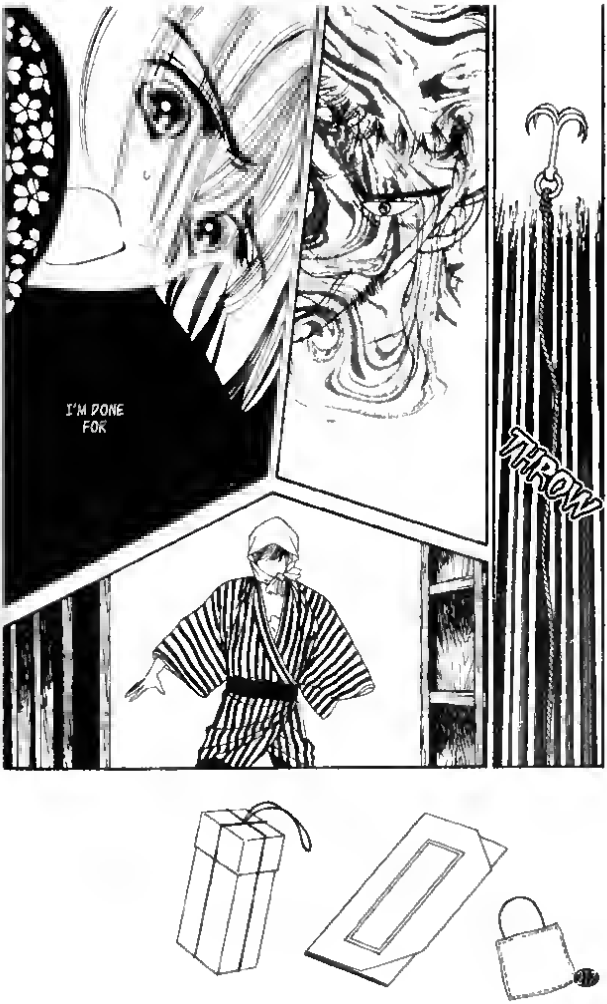
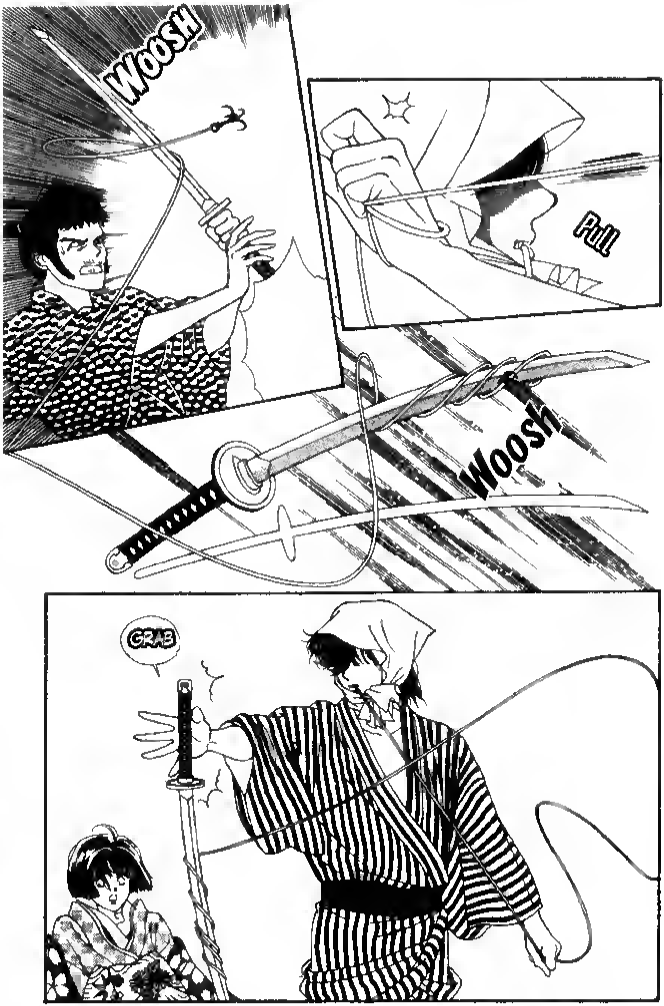
BAM
STOP !!
PAIN


I'M DONE FOR
THROW



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DAMNIT !
SANGETSU !

I, I'M FINE.
I CAN WALK
BY MY-SELF

GO NOW!!
BESIDES, IF THE POLICE ARRIVE HERE
YOU'LL BECOME A SUSPECT

IF I HAD THROWN MYSELF AT HIM AND CALLED OUT HIS NAME
WOULD I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RETURN INTO HIS EMBRACE
ONE MORE TIME ?
BUT I DIDN'T DO IT
I DIDN'T RUN AFTER HIM

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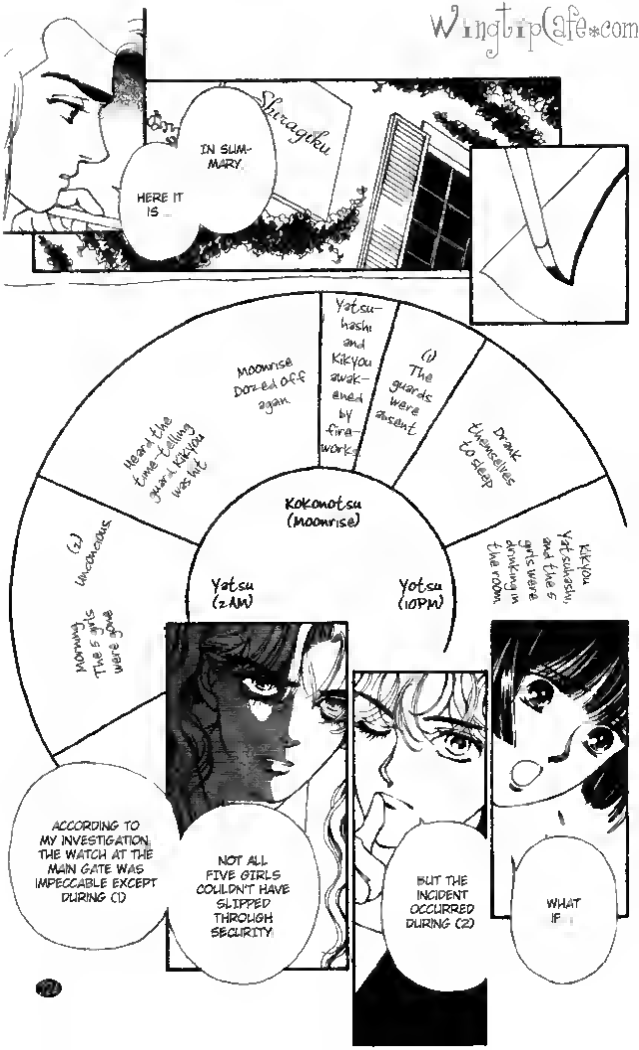
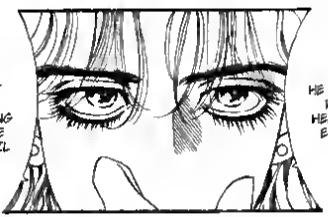


KIKYOU-SAN LIED TO PROTECT AKABOSHI!...?
EVEN SO THEY COULDN'T HAVE PASSED THROUGH THE MAIN ENTRANCE ANY TIME BETWEEN KOKONOTSU AND DAWN
THE ONLY TIME THEY COULD HAVE POSSIBLE ESCAPED FROM YOSHIWARA WAS DURING (1)


WHEN I ASKED AROUND LEARNED THAT THE RONIN AKABOSHI HIRONOSHIN WAS DRINKING AT THE KOMANO NOODLE STALL FROM YATSU UNTIL MORNING
HE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR HELPING THOSE GIRLS ESCAPE DURING (2)

WHAT ABOUT THE FIREWORKS? THEY WERE LIT FROM ASUMA BRIDGE AT THE OFFICIAL SIGNAL OF MOONRISE
MEANING THAT THOSE GIRLS MUST HAVE BEEN IN KIKYOU'S ROOM UNTIL KOKONOTSU

THEN HOW...
HOW DID THEY MAGICALLY DISAPPEAR?

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HOWEVER, YATSUHASHI-SAN SAID THAT SHE HAD SEEN THE WAXING MOON
WAXING CRESCENT MOON... SPARKLING LIGHT...
PERHAPS SHE SAW SOMETHING ELSE...
INSTEAD OF THE WANING CRESCENT MOON
WHAT IF WHAT SHE SAW
WASN'T THE MOON...?
NOT A MOON AT ALL?

* Okabasho = A brothel not licensed by government.

BELOW IS THE GARDEN
ABOVE IS NOTHING BUT THE SKY
FROM KIKYOU-SAN'S ROOM ON THE SECOND FLOOR...
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY RESEMBLE A CRESCENT MOON HANGING IN THE AIR SHINING SO BRIGHTLY?
HEY?
LISUGUMI O?
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

N...NO!
USUGUMO-CHAN, YOU'RE JEALOUS OF ME AREN'T YOU!?
Yatsuhashi
REALLY REALLY... AND I DID SEE LORD BUDDHA AND THE TWO DISCIPLES...
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I WAS WRONG? IT REALLY WAS THE MOON OF THE 26TH
THAT THING...
RESEMBLES THE MOON?
EH?
CLACK
220

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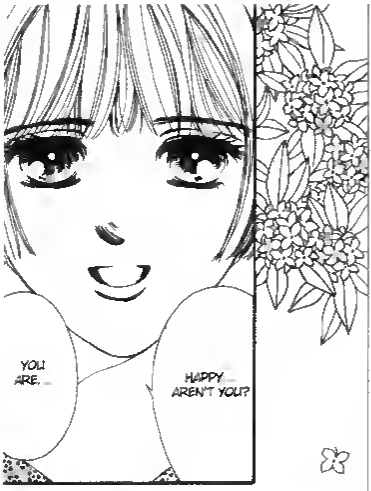

KIKYOU-SAN IS GOING TO MARRY THE ONE SHE LOVES

I HOPE THE RONIN WHO TRIED TO KILL ME IS NOT AKABOSHI HIKONOSHIN

KIKYOU-SAN DEEP IN DEBT, HER LIFE IS MANY TIMES MORE DIFFICULT THAN OTHERS

I WISH KIKYOU-SAN REAL HAPPINESS!!

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WOW!
FANCY STUFF! IS THIS THE MEAL FOR TOMORROW'S CEREMONY?
TOMORROW IS A BIG DAY FOR KIKYOU-SAN YOU SEE
I HEARD THAT THE BRIDE'S PALANQUIN AND THE BOAT ARE OF THE BEST QUALITY
BOAT
AH

KIKU-NOSUKE !!
BAM
PLEASE CHECK THE HOUSEBOATS BERTHING NEAR YOSHIWARA ON THE NIGHT OF NIJUUROKUYAMACHI DURING THE TIME OF KOKONOTSUI WHEN THE MOON ROSE!
WHAT YATSUHASHI-SAN SAW...
SEARCH
SEARCH
THE TEA IN THE CUP
MIRROR
BOAT
WAS REALLY A MOON!

BUT IT WAS... A REFLECTION IN THE WATER!!
The dancing water.
The sparkling light on the waves.
For a minute the water was still.
So present moon's mirrored image shone clearly on the water's surface.
WHAT YATSUHASHI-SAN SAW
WAS THE REFLECTION OF THE MOON IN THE RIVER FROM A SLIDING WINDOW OF A DOCKED HOUSEBOAT!

SORRY. PLEASE CANCEL EVERYTHING
OH...
THE FOOD, AND THE PALANQUIN AS WELL.
OH DEAR
WHAT A MESS!
YES, SIR.
I SLIPPED LAXATIVE INTO THE GUARDS BENTO WHEN THEY WENT TO THE TOILET
THEN AKABOSHI-SAMA AND I TOOK OUR CHANCE TO SNEAK THE FIVE GIRLS AND YATSUHASHI
WHO WERE ASLEEP BECAUSE OF THE SEDATIVE IN THEIR SAKE OUT THROUGH THE MAIN GATE.
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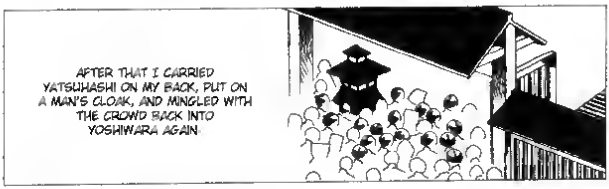
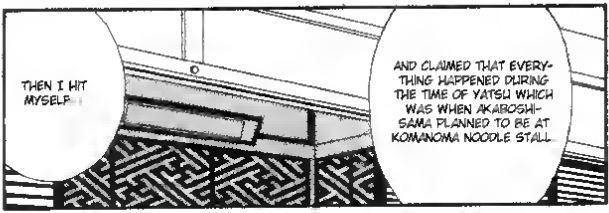
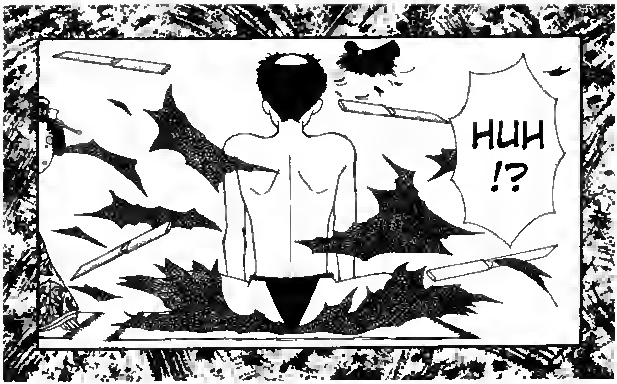
WE'LL BENEFIT FROM HER MISUNDERSTANDING
CONFUSE PEOPLE WITH THE TIMELINE—


AFTER THAT I CARRIED YATSUHASHI ON MY BACK, PUT ON A MAN'S CLOAK, AND MINGLED WITH THE CROWD BACK INTO YOSHIWARA AGAIN.


THEN I HIT MYSELF—
AND CLAIMED THAT EVERYTHING HAPPENED DURING THE TIME OF YATSU WHICH WAS WHEN AKABOSHI-SAMA PLANNED TO BE AT KOMANOMA NOODLE STALL.

THOSE FIVE GIRLS WERE PASSED ALONG FROM BOAT TO BOAT UNTIL THEY REACHED YOKOHAMA.

IN MY ORIGINAL PLAN, YATSUHASHI WOULD HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN THE PACKAGE BUT WE HAD TO MAKE DO WITH THOSE 5 GIRLS
SO I COULDN'T CLEAR OFF ALL OF MY DEBT.
I WAS THINKING TO SELL OFF KIKYOU IN THE PROCESS AND TAKE REFUGE IN KYOTO.
Y...
YOU JERK ...!!
COME ON..
THE MATTER BETWEEN US WAS A FALSE PRETENSE FROM THE START.
CHINK
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP


HUH
!?

STAB
ACK
!!!

The verdict
Akaboshi Hironoshin was banished to a remote island.
Kikyou-san faced punishment from Miura's owner.

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LIVE YOUR LIFE WITH VIGOR LIKE HER
LOVE LIKE HER.
AS LONG AS USUGUMO IS THERE
THE YOSHIWARA WILL BE SAFE
HE SAID THAT.

WATCHING CLOSELY ONE CAN SEE..
FALLING INTO
MY ALMOST FROZEN HEART
SANGETSU !
HOW THE SHOWERING SNOW
IS MIXED WITH RAIN
THIS WARM SNOW RAINS DOWN

AS THE WATER OF LIFE TRIGGERING THE FLOWER BLOSSOMS
THEN DIS-APPEARS
In the second month, on the first day of the Hatsu-uma festival,
my spring began

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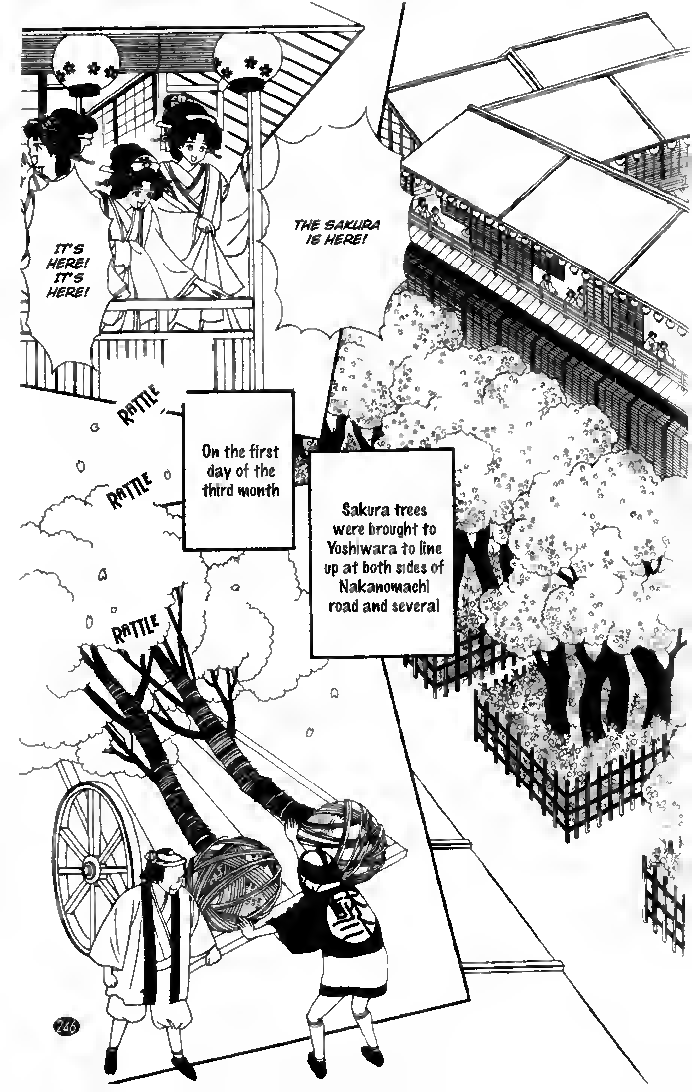
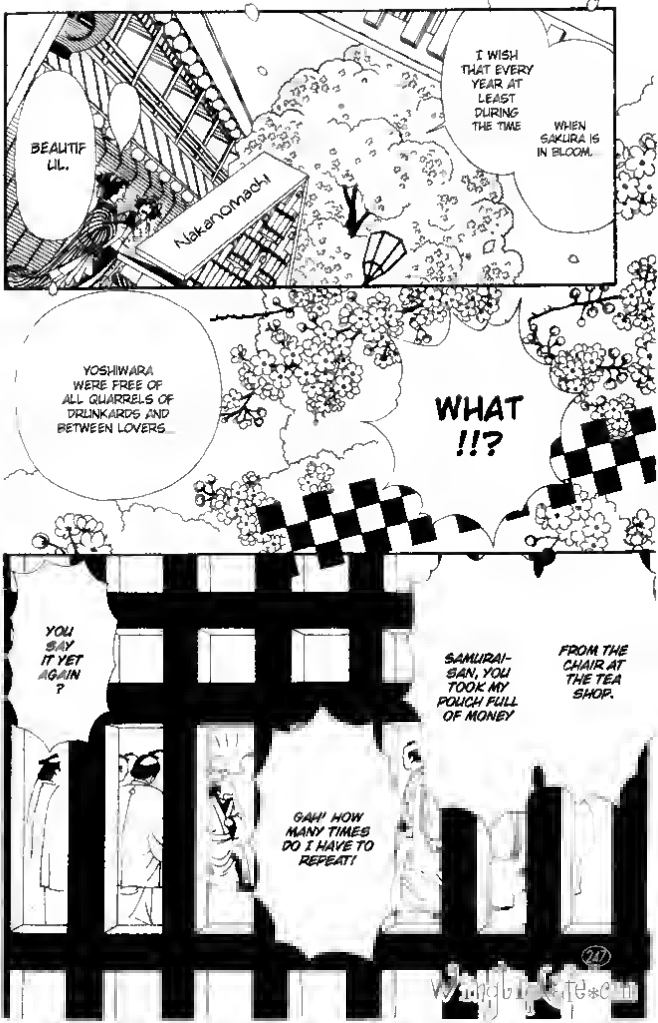

IT'S HERE! IT'S HERE!
THE SAKURA IS HERE!
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
On the first day of the third month
Sakura trees were brought to Yoshiwara to line up at both sides of Nakanomachi road and several


BEAUTIFUL.
Nakanomachi
I WISH THAT EVERY YEAR AT LEAST DURING THE TIME WHEN SAKURA IS IN BLOOM.
YOSHIWARA WERE FREE OF ALL QUARRELS OF DRUNKARDS AND BETWEEN LOVERS...
WHAT !!?
YOU SAY IT YET AGAIN ?
GAH! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO REPEAT!
SAMURAI-SAN, YOU TOOK MY POUCH FULL OF MONEY FROM THE CHAIR AT THE TEA SHOP.

YOU...!
YOU... YOU'RE BUT A MERCHANT, HOW DARE YOU ACCUSE A SAMURAI OF THEFT!?
PSHAW! IDIOT!
HIC
HERE IN YOSHIWARA
COUNTRYSIDE SAMURAI ARE THE LOWEST YOU'RE NOT WELCOME HERE
COUNTRYSIDE SAMURAI ARE THE LOWEST YOU'RE NOT WELCOME HERE
HOW SHAME-FUL
HE MUST HAVE DRUNK A LOT TO PUT ON AIRS LIKE THAT
SUCH SCURRILOUS TALKING, ONE AFTER ANOTHER.
INEXCUSABLE! HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHO THIS PERSON IS ...?
CALM DOWN, SANDAYUU

MER-CHANT,
HOW MUCH MONEY WAS IN YOUR POUCH?
I PUT IN ALL OF MY SHOP'S SALES 20 RYOS.
PUMED
THEN
I SHALL COMPENSATE YOU THUSLY
YOU WON'T GO BACK TO YOUR SHOP EMPTY-HANDED
WHAT !?
Toss
CATCH
HOW-EVER,
WHEN THE REAL CULPRIT WHO STOLE YOUR MONEY IS FOUND,
I WILL HAVE YOUR LIFE IN RETURN. WHAT SAY YOU?

Fu Fu
HEH!
HEHEHEH, ALRIGHT. FINE BY ME
IF THE THIEF HAPPENS TO REVEAL HIMSELF.
WAIT A SECOND MISTER.
A poorly-dressed samurai shouldn't have 10 ryo in his wallet
And he said he didn't steal
Pulse
SAYING THAT THE SAMURAI'S ODDS LOOK PRETTY SLIM.
Teehee
SNEAK
PULL
WE'RE GETTING TO THE FUN PART.

ACK !
Shink
Shink
Shink
AH ...!?
AHH!
THE POUCH WITH MY KOUSHUU SHOP'S SIGN!
OUCH !!
EH? REALLY, MASA-SAN
SO THIS MAN IS THE THIEF?
NO! USUGUMO-CHAN HELP ME!
WRONG-FULLY ACCUSING HIM LIKE THAT
THEN IT CAN'T BE HELPED IF THE SAMURAI IS GOING TO TAKE MASA-SAN'S LIFE

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HOLD ON, MY LORD S. MUTUAL
TOUCH .
BUT WHAT I WANT IS THIS MAN'S LIFE
THE PERSON WHO FOUND THE THIEF WHO STOLE MAGA-SAN S POUCH IS ME
SHOULDN'T YOU HAVE THE COURTESY TO REWARD ME WITH SOMETHING?
NAME ANYTHING YOU LIKE HAND, FOOT, OR EYE, I'M PLEASED TO CHOP HIS OFF FOR YOU.
.....
IN THAT CASE, I SHALL HAVE HIS SKIN
THE WHOLE OF HIS SKIN.

ACHU!
USUGUMO!
BUT WITHOUT A WOUND.
I DEMAND HIS SKIN WITHOUT A SINGLE NICK OF THE SWORD.
CAN YOU DO THAT?
USUGUMO IS YOUR NAME?
USUGUMO-OIRAN OF EDO'S MIURA BROTHEL. MY LORD.
WHILE THE SAKURA IN YOSHIWARA IS STILL IN BLOOM, PLEASE STOP BY SOMETIMES.

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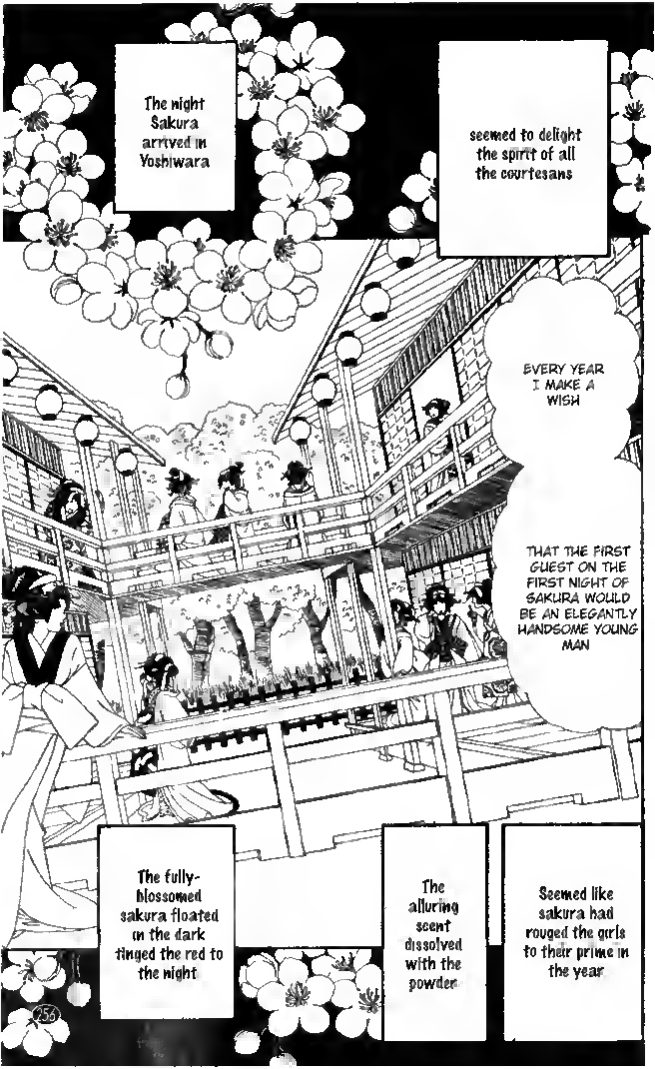

The night Sakura arrived in Yoshiwara
seemed to delight the spirit of all the courtesans
EVERY YEAR I MAKE A WISH
THAT THE FIRST GUEST ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF SAKURA WOULD BE AN ELEGANTLY HANDSOME YOUNG MAN
The fully-blossomed sakura floated in the dark tinged the red to the night
The alluring scent dissolved with the powder
Seemed like sakura had rouged the girls to their prime in the year

ON THIS OCCASIONAL NIGHT, YOU SHOULD EXERCISE YOUR EXPERTISE IN DISGUISE TO COME VISIT ME
SAN-GETSU
WHAT WISHFUL THINKING
I WAS THE ONE PUTTING THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US.
WHAT A PITY...
BECAUSE TONIGHT I AM...
EEXCEP-TIONALLY BEAUTI-FUL...

USUGUMO-CHAN, TONIGHT'S GUEST IS A HIGHBORN...
MUNEMASA-DONO IS A 7TH GENERATION DAIMYO, OF KII-TOKUGAWA CLAN
EH? SO...
YES
HE'S YOUR DISTANT COUSIN
BUT DON'T YOU WORRY. HE HAS NO IDEA YOU'RE A PRINCESS
MUNEMASA-DONO
Slide
LORD KII, THE OIRAN IS HERE.
FATHER USED TO MENTION HE PLANNED TO MAKE THIS PERSON HIS SUCCESSOR OF BAKUFU GOVERNMENT

LET'S FIND OUT
WHAT KIND OF PERSON DESERVES SUCH HIGH PRAISES FROM FATHER
RISE
259

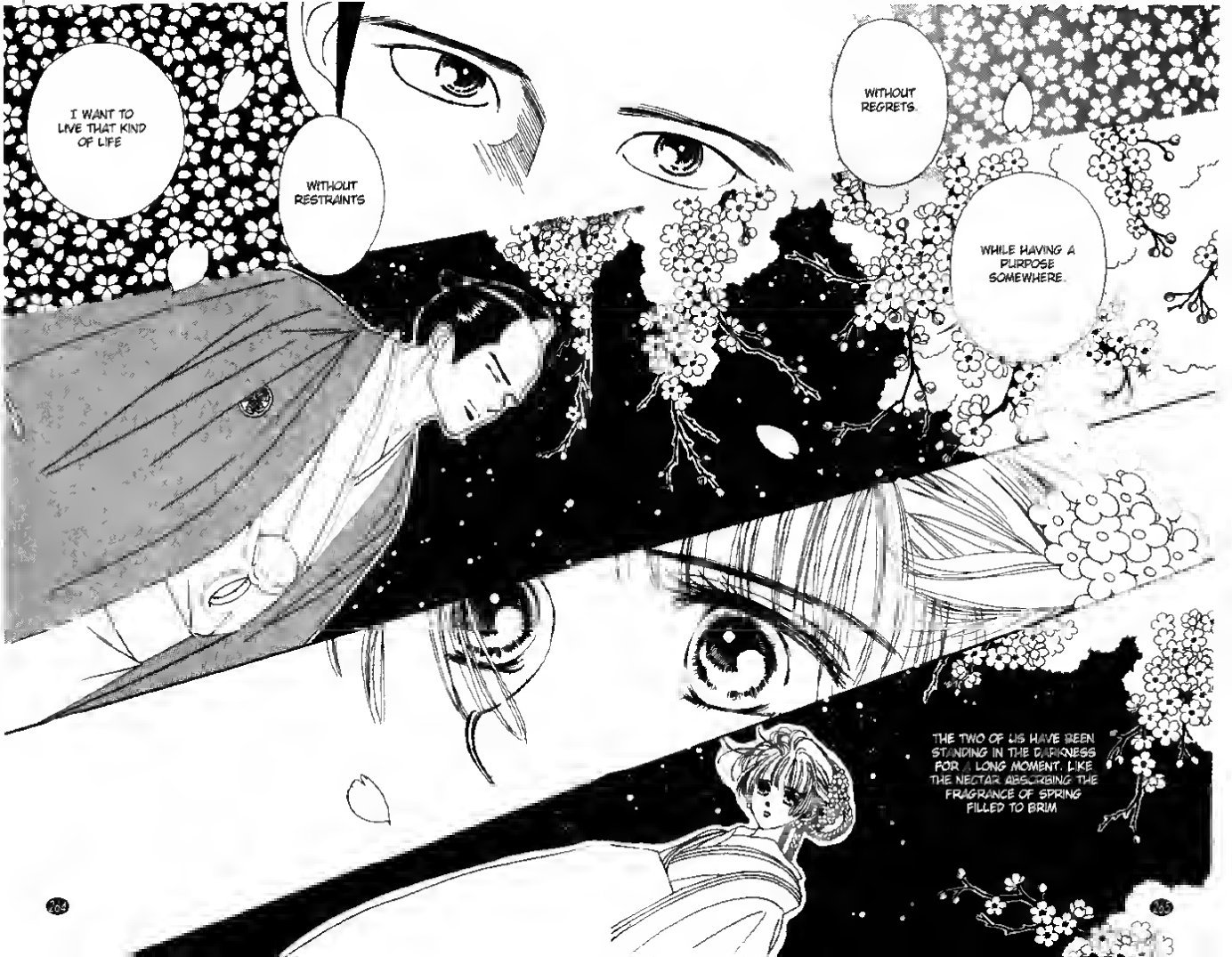
TO ADMIRE THE BLOSSOMS THROUGH THE WINDOWS WOULD BE A SHAMEFUL NIGHT.
OIRAN, LET'S US TAKE A STROLL OUTSIDE.
IS IT WISE LEAVING YOUR ATTENDANTS BEHIND LIKE THAT?
YOU URGED ME TO VISIT YOU WHILE THE SAKURA WERE STILL HERE TO BE ADMIRED. SO I RUSHED TO BE HERE.
TURNED OUT, I DIDN'T NEED TO RUSH AT ALL.
BECAUSE THERE IS AN EVER-BLOSSOMING SAKURA HERE IN YOSHIWARA.
AN EVER-BLOSSOMING SAKURA?
WHERE?
.....
OH?
HMM ....?
YEAH. WHERE?
OH, NEVER MIND.
JUST LEAVE THEM WITH SAKE
Look look
Usugawa-dayu's guest is such a pale-looking samurai!
260
261

T/N *Bushi= Warrior clans

WHILE THE PETALS ARE FALLING DOWN CARELESSLY,

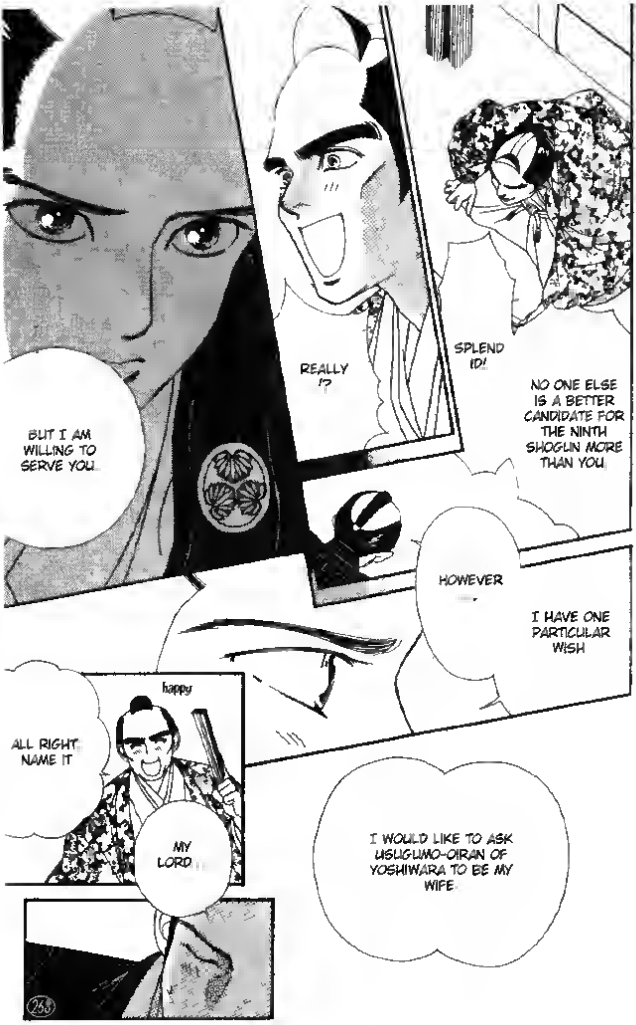
THE SPIRIT OF SAKURA TREE SOARS AND SOARS TO THE HIGHEST OF THE SKY.

AS IF A NEW JOURNEY HAS BEGUN.


I WANT TO LIVE THAT KIND OF LIFE
WITHOUT RESTRAINTS
WITHOUT REGRETS.
WHILE HAVING A PURPOSE SOMEWHERE.
THE TWO OF US HAVE BEEN STANDING IN THE DARKNESS FOR A LONG MOMENT. LIKE THE NECTAR ABSORBING THE FRAGRANCE OF SPRING FILLED TO BRIM

WHEN HE IS SMILING HIS EYES ARE REALLY SIMILAR TO THAT PERSON'S
IF IT IS THIS MAN,
YES.
FATHER
YOU HAVE MY AFFROVAL

MY LORD, MUNEMASA-DONO IS HERE TO SEE YOU
HMM...
SHOW HIM IN.
CLAP
YOU'VE COME
MUNE-MASA
ABOUT THE SHOGUN'S REQUEST THE OTHER DAY--
IT IS SUCH A BURDEN BEYOND THIS MUNEMASA'S SHOULDERS


BUT I AM WILLING TO SERVE YOU.
REALLY !?
SPLENDID!
NO ONE ELSE IS A BETTER CANDIDATE FOR THE NINTH SHOGUN MORE THAN YOU.
HOWEVER
I HAVE ONE PARTICULAR WISH
happy
ALL RIGHT. NAME IT.
MY LORD!
I WOULD LIKE TO ASK USUGUMO-OIRAN OF YOSHIWARA TO BE MY WIFE.
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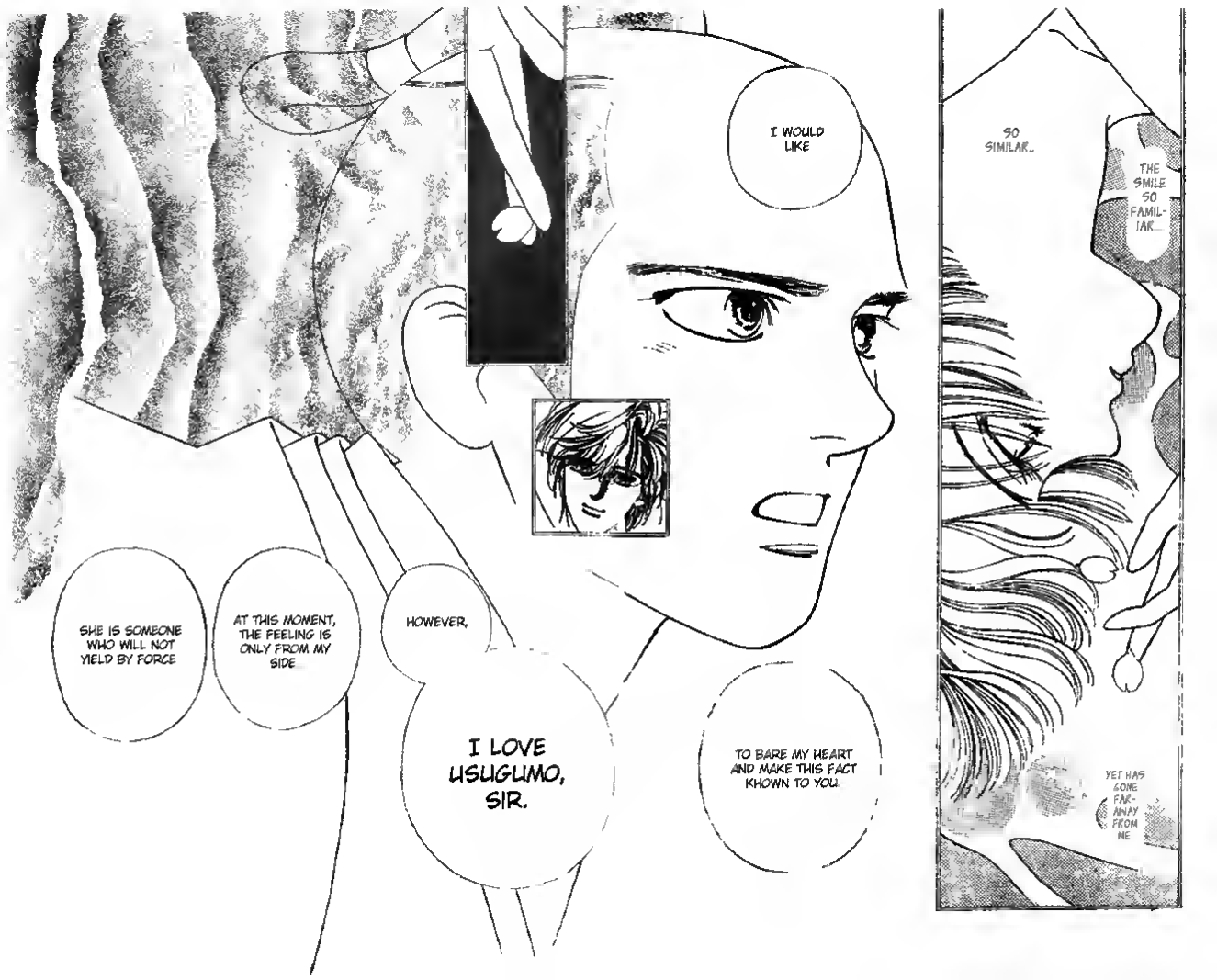
I WOULD LIKE
SO SIMILAR..
THE SMILE SO FAMIL-IAR...
YET HAS GONE FAR-AWAY FROM ME
SHE IS SOMEONE WHO WILL NOT YIELD BY FORCE
AT THIS MOMENT, THE FEELING IS ONLY FROM MY SIDE
HOWEVER,
I LOVE USUGUMO, SIR.
TO BARE MY HEART AND MAKE THIS FACT KNOWN TO YOU.

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Larve
Larve
Larve
I'M HOME.

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NOTHIN
G
NOTHING HAPPENED
I WAS JUST SO HAPPY I RUSHED BACK HOME
OH, YES. THE LADY FROM SHIRAKI SHOP CAME TO HAVE A LOOK TOO. SHE SAID SHE'D LIKE TO BUY THE WHOLE LOT TO SELL AT HER SHOP.
IT'D BE SO WONDERFUL IF SHE DOES
HAVING YOUR WORKS DISPLAYED AT SUCH A GRAND STORE
SANGETSU
YOU ARE REALLY SKILLED
YOU CARVE THESE TINY DOLLS IN ALMOST NO TIME AT ALL

SANGETSU, YOU STILL WON'T SPIT OUT ONE WORD ABOUT YOURSELF.
EVEN THOUGH WE'VE BEEN LIVING TOGETHER FOR A LONG TIME,
AND WHERE YOU'RE FROM.
LIKE WHAT YOU USED TO DO
WE'RE NOT LIVING TOGETHER. YOU JUST HAPPENED TO FOLLOW ME HERE
BESIDES...
Thump
!?

KYA!
PLOP
PLOP
PLOP
YOU'RE MORE SKILLED THAN I AM.
DIDN'T YOU PROMISE ME TO STOP PICKING POCKETS!?
BUT... BUT...
MY DOCTOR SAID I SHOULD EXERCISE MY FINGERS
LIAR!
BUT THEY'RE NOT FROM CUSTOMERS WHO BOUGHT YOUR DOLLS I ONLY TARGETED THOSE RICH BUT STINGY ONES WHO DIDN'T BUY OUR GOODS
STILL NO!

THESE DOLLS ARE REALLY GOOD.
SIMPLE CRAFTSMANSHIP AND TINY, LIKE POPPY SEEDS
BUT HARBORING SUCH FRIGHTFUL EMOTIONS.
I USED TO COMMISSION SOMEONE TO MAKE DOLLS FOR ME
NOT ONLY WERE THEY EXQUISITE,
THEY MOVED LIKE A HUMAN AND ATTACKED ANY PERSON THEY HATED.
EVEN KILLING THEM
DO YOU KNOW A MAN NAMED "SANGETSU" ?
NO!

(*Komusou = A begging Zen priest of the **Fuke** sect (wearing a sedge hood and playing a flute. Since this made an excellent disguise, the costume was often used by shinobi.)

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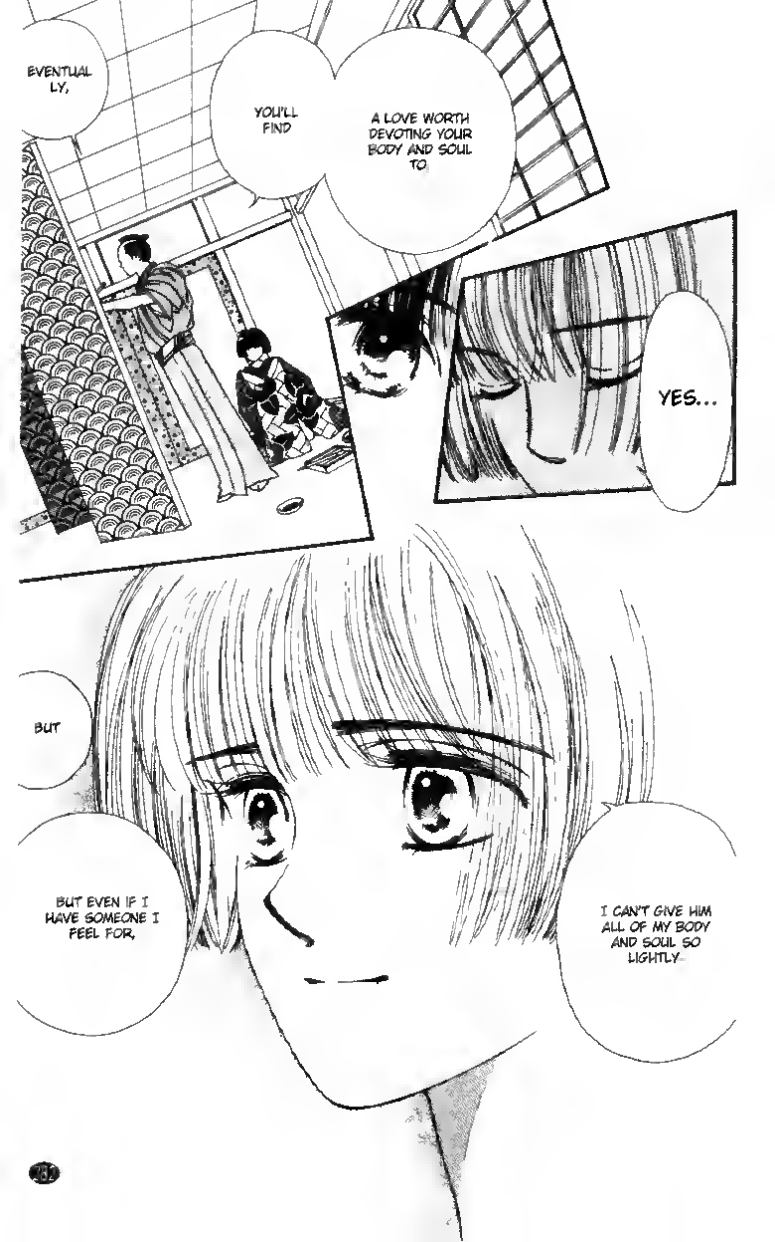
HAS-SAN, HAVE YOU HEARD ?
LOOKS LIKE MUNEMASA-DONO OF KISHUU IS CRAZY ABOUT USUGUMO.
OOH, THAT'S BIG.
BUT YOU SEE, ORDINARY GETA-WEARING PEOPLE CAN'T COMPETE WITH HIM.
WHAT IF WE HEIGHTEN THE HEEL OF OUR GETA?
IT SEEMS . . .
THAT WE'RE THE TALK OF THE TOWN.

IS THAT WISE?
Ha ha ha
LET IT BE
IT'S THE TRUTH ANYWAYS.
SWISH
SWISH
STROKE
IF THE RUMOR SPREADS HIGHER UP,
THOSE KAROU* WILL PROBABLY GIVE UP.
PLEASE STOP JOKING.
MAYBE IT'LL BOOST MY POPULARITY
PEOPLE WILL TAKE PITY ON MUNEMASA-DONO, A HOPELESS FOOL IN THIS ONE-SIDED LOVE.
AS EVERYONE IN EDO KNOWS
USUGUMO HAS SUCH HIGH SELF-ESTEEM AND WON'T FOLD TO THE DAIMYO FOR MONEY.
*Karou = Daimyo's ministers


EVENTUAL LY,
YOU'LL FIND
A LOVE WORTH DEVOTING YOUR BODY AND SOUL TO
YES...
BUT
BUT EVEN IF I HAVE SOMEONE I FEEL FOR,
I CAN'T GIVE HIM ALL OF MY BODY AND SOUL SO LIGHTLY

AND I'M NOT TALKING IN VAIN HERE
BUT MY "HEART" OF LOVE DWELLS NOT ONLY IN MY BREAST
UNDERNEATH ALL OF MY SKIN I HAVE A "HEART" AS WELL
WHEN ALL OF MY "HEART" IS CAPTURED
I WON'T BE "ME" ANYMORE.
I AM
A WOMAN
WITH THAT BURNING,
PASSION-ATE KIND OF LOVE

...THEN
WILL YOU GIVE THAT LOVE
TO THIS MUNEMASA?

I'D LIKE FOR YOU TO BE MY WIFE
I REALLY DO...
OH --
YOU MUST BE KIDDING ME
THE LORD OF KII WOULDN'T POSSIBLY MARRY AN OIRAN OF YOSHIWARA
BUT YOU'RE THE BLOOD-DAUGHTER OF THE SHOGUN TOO.
I...
WAS GIVEN AN ORDER FROM HIS LORDSHIP TO TAKE THE POST OF THE NINTH SHOGUN OF TOKUGAWA BAKUFU
BAM
THROW
YOU KNEW
IT'S IRRELEVANT I FELL FOR YOU WITHOUT KNOWING THAT FACT ANYWAY.

IF SOMEONE WITH AN ARDENT SENSE OF JUSTICE LIKE YOU AGREES TO BE BY MY SIDE,
HELPS ME, THE RULER, AND KEEPS ME IN LINE WITH YOUR FIRM HANDS EVERY NOW AND THEN,
I'LL BE MUCH MORE CONFIDENT.
PERHAPS YOU MAY LOSE YOURSELF IN YOUR BURNING, PASSIONATE LOVE,
BUT I'LL HOLD YOU VERY TIGHTLY

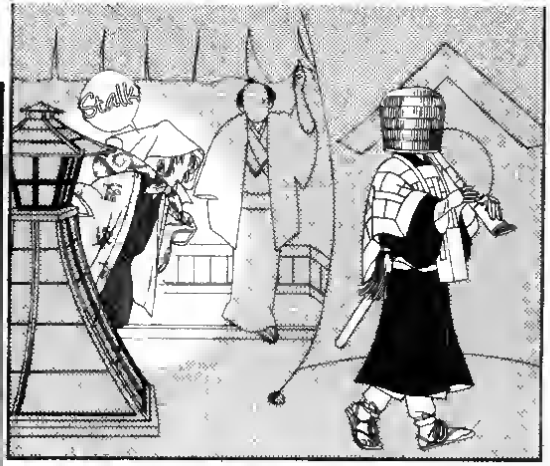
AND MOST WILLINGLY,
EVEN IF I DO END UP BEING THE LOST CHILD IN YOUR EMBRACE MYSELF...

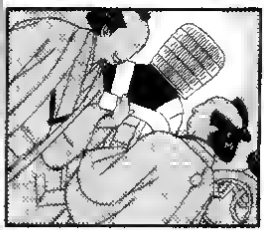
MAYBE...
PROBABLY I CAN HAVE THE PERFECT LOVE
WITH SOMEONE RESPECTABLE,
PRISTINE FROM ALL DISSATISFACTIONS
FREE OF THE DIFFERENCE IN CLASSES
AND OPINIONS
WITH MUNEMASA-DONO, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO IT

THEN WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
THERE'S JUST ONE MORE THING--
IT STILL LACKS ONE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT
OF TRUE LOVE
HARDSHIP, MY LORD.
TRUE LOVE
MUST COME WITH HARDSHIPS.

*Hinamatsuri – Girls' Day is held on March 3. People usually display a set of ornamental dolls of the Heian period.

Flute's
tune


Stalk



Step
step

Tap
tap

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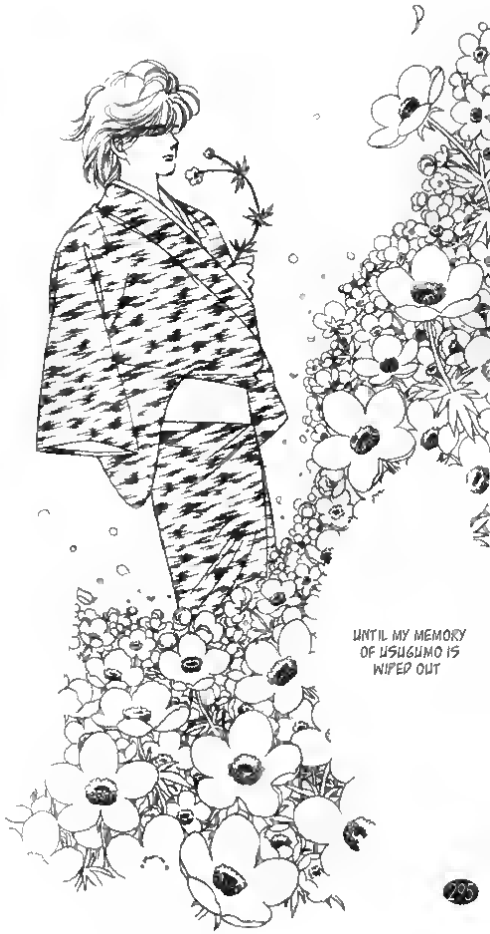
KILL SANGETS U...!!
THIS...THIS ...
WHY... WHY... ?
AIEE?

"Go now before the police find you."
THOSE WORDS REMINDED ME PAINFULLY OF THE VAST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HER WORLD AND MINE
AFTER THAT, WE BOTH WENT BACK TO OUR LIFES
WHY DO I CONTINUE TO HARBOR THIS FEELING?

IF I CAN'T GET RID OF IT, MAYBE I SHOULD JUST PICK ONE

IT MAY NOT BE AS PASSIONATE, BUT A SMALL AND GENTLE KINDLING TINDER



THAT MIGHT LOWER

THE INTENSITY OF MY FEELING,

SLOWLY, SLOWLY

UNTIL MY MEMORY OF USUGUMO IS WIPED OUT

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
BANG
Slide
FINALLY-- SAFE
Huff
PANT
PANT
PANT
Slide
I'M NO MATCH FOR HIM

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SANGETSU...
!!
RATTLE
AH.

KYA
SLIDE
OYUU ?
ARE YOU HOME?
Rustle

OYUU
!!

SU-
ZAKU
!!
THE ONLY
PERSON
CAPABLE OF
SOMETHING THIS
CRUEL IS ...

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